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OCTOBER 1965
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15th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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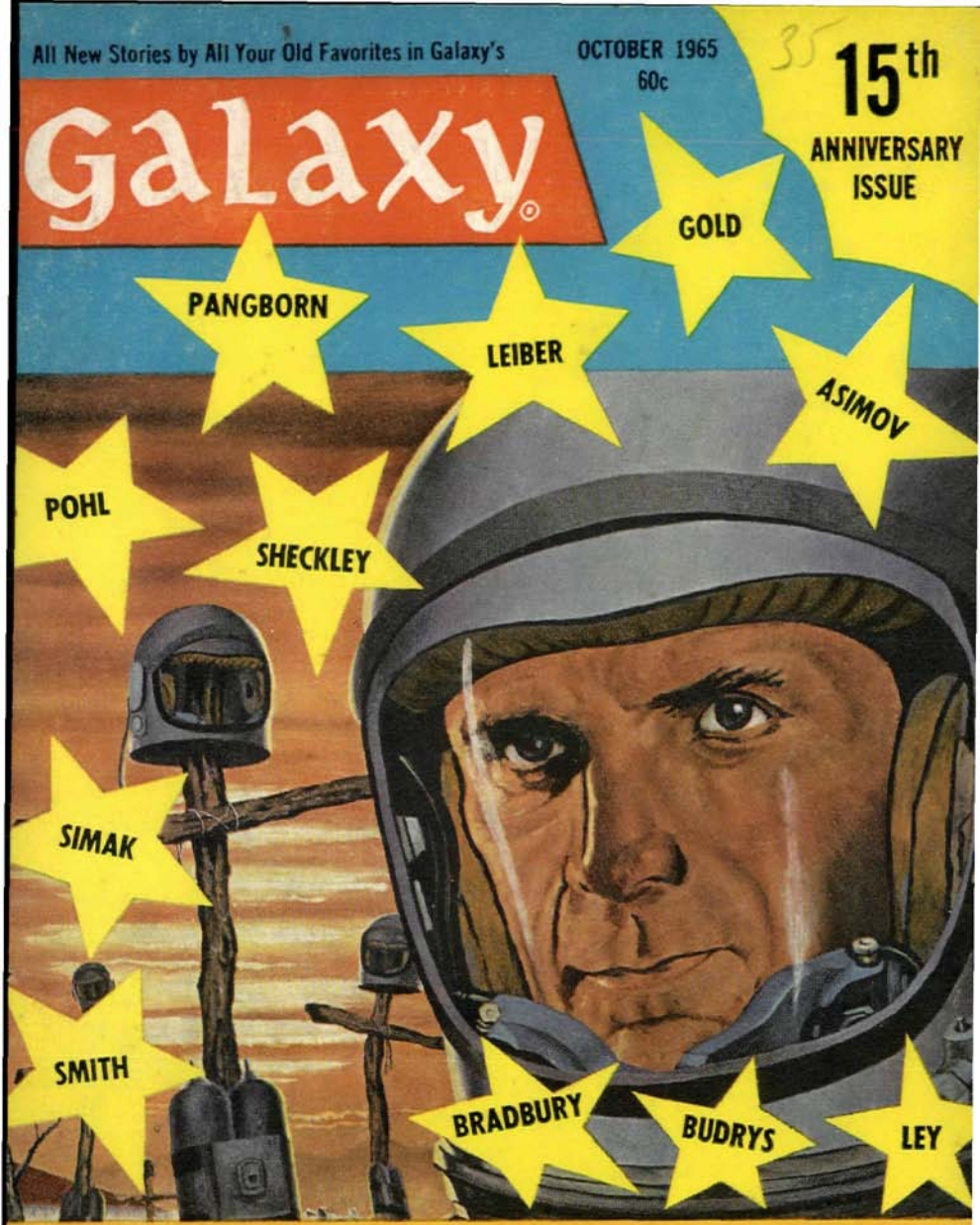

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L. GOLD	Inside Man	ROBERT SHECKLEY	Shall We Have A Little Talk?
TZ LEIBER	The Good New Days	CLIFFORD D. SIMAK	Small Deer
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Galaxy
MAGAZINE

ALL STORIES NEW

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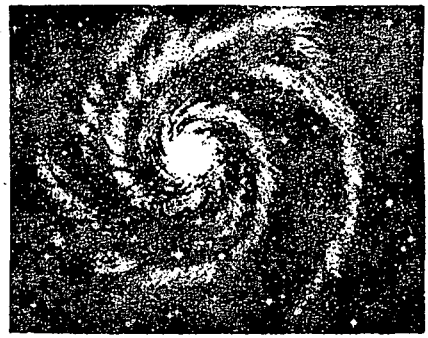

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The Day After Tomorrow

Looking into the future of science fiction is tricky business. Any prediction is a risk. A prediction of what so quintessentially a predictive technique as the writing of science fiction may be like at some later date than this one is not merely twice as risky: it is folly squared.

But it seems to us that there are trends. And this fifteenth anniversary issue of *Galaxy* may be a good time to set a few remarks about them down.

The first real science-fiction magazine appeared not quite forty years ago, in the spring of 1926. It was edited by Hugo Gernsback and its principal substance was the kind of stories Gernsback himself used to write: a sort of animated catalogue of gadgets. Granting that was what he did, he did it superbly, and as a matter of fact much of science fiction's record of accurate predictions stems from those early Gernsback-type stories: radar, television, atomic power, rockets, etc., et al. The mixture was flavored with a heavy admixture of H. G. Wells reprints (sermons and polemics, beautifully written), and a trace of Edgar Rice Burroughs; and that tonic brightened the lives of lots of people for nearly a decade.

Then a man named Stanley G. Weinbaum came along with a revolutionary idea. It was his thought that you could give some sort of three-dimensional reality to the characters in science-fiction stories. He was not quite so daring as to try it with his human beings, but his Martians, his Venusians and his Ganymedan balloon-heads are still vividly remembered as *persons* a third of a century later.

Less than a decade later John Campbell came up with a fresh and fascinating mixture: write your stories, he told his writers, as though they were going to be printed as contemporary fiction in a magazine of the 22d century. And they did it; and they did it very well. L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. Heinlein, Lester del Rey and any number of others responded with stories that are in print on the pocketbook racks right now. And about ten years after that it was *Galaxy*'s turn; and with H. L. Gold as editor another new batch of ingredients were added. Their names were *wit* and *relevance;* and they were compounded by writers like Rob-

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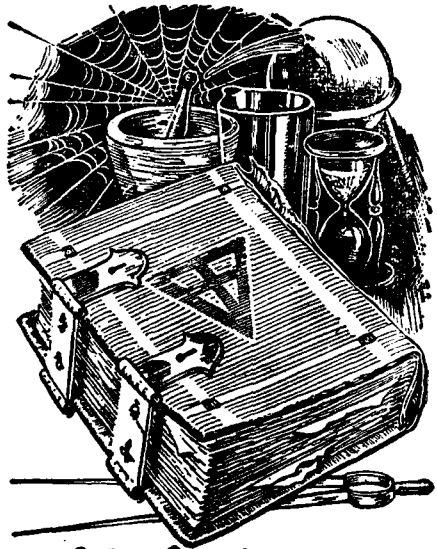
Secrets entrusted to a few



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ert Sheckley, Fritz Leiber, Alfred Bester, Damon Knight, the late C. M. Kornbluth and others — including most of those in this issue

Well, this is an attempt to look ahead, not a history of science fiction. But oversimplified and sketchy though what we have just said may be, it illustrates a principle. Science fiction advances in a series of quantum jumps.

It may seem to you from the above timetable that we are about due for another jump.

It seems so to us, too; and as a matter of fact, we think we're in it right now.

With negligible exceptions (Wells, Stapledon and who?), nearly every science-fiction writer up to a very few years ago made one hidden — and indefensible — assumption. They assumed that science changed; that the world changed; that everything you could imagine changed, except one thing. They assumed that the human race did not change at all.

And of course the human race does. It has been changing from the day the first australopithecine picked up an antelope femur and broke it over a dire-wolf's head. It is changing now, just as it has throughout the human past; the only difference is that now it is changing more rapidly than ever before. It will be changing tomorrow, too; but it will be changing faster still.

It is technology that is changing us so rapidly, of course. As man remakes his environment he changes the Darwinian criteria of what, exactly, is "fittest". Calamity criers have made much of the black side of this picture: we are breeding a race of cripples, they say, pointing to what modern medicine has done to take the sting out of incurable genetic flaws. (One of the traits the human race seems to have had for a good many generations is this same habit of preserving its "unfit". How many remember that the first Neanderthal skeleton gave a very erroneous picture of the species because it chanced to be that of a middle-aged man with an advanced case of arthritis? He could not have survived by himself; he had to have been preserved, fed and cared for.

The interesting thing about technological change is that its rate of growth gives every sign of being exponential. The oldest computer, if it were human, would just barely be able to vote; but in rather less than a human generation the computers have firmly and irrevocably changed the rate of change. Visiting the Harvard-Smithsonian Astrophysi-

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cal Observatory the other day, we talked to a man named Owen Gingerich who, last Christmas, duplicated the work of Johann Kepler in determining the laws of planetary orbits. It took Kepler three or four years to work out the laws a few centuries ago. Last Christmas, using the same observed data and the same mathematical procedures, Gingerich repeated the process in eight days. Eight days of his own human time, that is. Those eight days were spent merely in setting up the problem so that a computer could solve it; and the actual operating time of the computer was twelve point four *seconds.*

To those who have been reading stories by, for example, Jack Vance and Cordwainer Smith in *Galaxy* lately, this news is no news. For that is what they and others have been writing about: Not you and we transplanted into the world of the future, but the people of the world of the future operating on their own terms. Perhaps they will think faster and more surely than we (by a factor of three years divided by twelve point four seconds, for example). Perhaps they will have traveled so far from us that even computers are no longer relevant to their lives, as Vance described in *The Drag on Masters* (and in the new manuscript, just in, called *The Last Castle,* which we will be bringing you before long.

They may in fact differ from us in ways that we can't as yet guess; but what is important is to realize that they *will* differ from us. As John Pierce says, there is only one future in a tangible sense; that is, when it gets here there will only be the one single set of events that will take place. But our discussions of the future can take the form of endless alternative worlds. We don't know which will be the "true" future — so we might as well imagine as many as we can.

Well, that's what we're bending every effort to bring you in *Galaxy's* future.

Be specific? All right. As you can see, Robert Sheckley's back with us — and to stay, it seems, because he's working on a batch of new ones for us right now.

Cordwainer Smith is off in the South Pacific on an anthropological expedition but before he left he finished *Under Old Earth* which strikes us as one of his best stories ever. Keith Laumer will be coming up again; so will Isaac Asimov; so will Robert Silverberg; so will . . .

Well, that's looking far enough ahead. The rest of the forecasting we'll leave to the writers!

— THE EDITOR

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The AGE of the

Forrester had made his mind up. He was going to adjust to this mad new world even if it killed him—again!

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PUSSYFOOT

by FREDERIK POHL

SERIAL

Illustrated by WOOD

PART ONE

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I

Over everyone in the room, or perhaps it was a park, the lighting cast shapes and symbols of color. The girl in the filmy gown had at one moment glittering pink eyes, and at the next an aura of silvery hair. The man next to Forrester had golden skin and a mask of shadow. Wisps of odor drifted past him, rosebuds following sage. There were snatches of a crystalline, far-off music.

"I'm rich!" he yelled. "And alive!"

No one seemed to mind. Forrester plucked one of the colorless grapes Hara had recommended to him, rose, patted the girl in the filmy dress and walked unsteadily down to the pool where the revelers splashed and swam in a naked tangle. In spite of the long post-revival indoctrinatior that had given him so many new things and removed so much trash that was old, Forrester had not lost the habit of prurience.

"It's Forrester the rich man!" one of them shouted. Forrester smiled and waved. A girl cried, "Sing him a song! A song!" And they all splashed and sang:

Oh, he died and died and died —
(SPLASH)
And he cried and he cried and he cried —
(SPLASH)
With his rages and his cholers he's a puzzle to the scholars,
And he's got a quarter of a million dollars!
Forrester!
(SPLASH, SPLASH)

Forrester ducked without thinking, then relaxed. He allowed them to drench him with the warm, scented water. "Enjoy, enjoy!" he cried, grinning at the bare bodies. Bronze and ivory, lean or soft, every body was beautiful. He knew that none of them would think the worse of him if he touched the two snaps at throat and waist and stepped out of his clothes to join them. But he also knew that his body would not compare well with the Adonises, would not impress the full-breasted Venuses, and so he stayed on the rim. "Drink and be merry, for yesterday we died," he called and squirted them at random with his joymaker. He didn't mind that he was not as beautiful as they. At least, not at this moment. He was happy. Nothing was troubling him. Not worry, not weariness, not fear. Not even his conscience; for, although he was wasting time, he had a right to waste time.

Hara had said so. "Relax," ad-

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vised Hara. "Get acclimated. Go slow. You've been dead a long time." Forrester was well content to follow his advice. In the morning he would take things seriously. In the morning he would go out into this world and make a place for himself. With unassuming pride he thought that he would do this not because he really needed to, for he had that quarter of a million dollars all right, but because it was proper that he should work and earn joy. He would be a good citizen.

Experimentally he shouted what he thought of as a friendly obscene suggestion to one of the girls (although Hara had said that the talk of this time contained no obscenities). In return she made a charming gesture, which Forrester tried to think of as an obscene one, and her companion, stretched out at the edge of the pool, drowsily lifted his joymaker and drenched Forrester with a tingling spray that, startlingly, brought him to an instant thrill of sexual excitement and then left him replete and momentarily exhausted.

What a delightful way to live, Forrester thought. He turned and walked away, followed by song:

> And he slept and he slept and he slept,
> And he wept and he wept and he wept —
> Is he damning? Is he dooming?
> For that matter, is he human?
> Forrester!

But he was too far away for them to splash him now, and he had seen someone he wanted to talk to.

It was a girl. She had just come in and was still rather sober. She was alone. And she was quite as tall as Forrester himself.

Hara would introduce him if asked, Forrester knew, since this was more or less Hara's party. But he did not at that moment see Hara. Didn't need Hara, either, he decided. He walked up to the girl and touched her on the arm.

"I am Charles D. Forrester," he said. "I am six hundred and twenty-six old. I have a quarter of a million dollars. This is my first day out of the sleep-freeze, and I would appreciate it if you would sit down and talk to me for a while, or kiss me."

"Certainly," she said, taking his hand. "Let's lie down here on the violets. Careful of my joymaker; it's loaded with something special."

Half an hour later Hara came by and found them, lying on their backs, each with an arm

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under the other, heads inclined toward each other.

Forrester noticed him at once, but went on talking to the girl. They had been plucking and eating the glass-clear grapes from a vine over their heads. The intoxicating fruit, the occasion and his general sense of well being combined to erase social obligations from his mind. Anyway, Hara would understand and forgive any offense. "Don't mind him, dear," Forrester said to the girl. "You were telling me not to sign up as a donor."

"Or as game. A lot of greenhorns fall for that, because the money's good. But the way they get you is that you don't figure what it will cost in the long run."

"That's very interesting," said Forrester, then sighed, looked away from the girl and nodded up at Hara. "You know, Hara," he said, "you're a drag."

"And you're a drunk," said Hara. "Hello, Tip. You two seem to be getting on well enough."

"He's nice," the girl said. "Of course, you're nice too, Tip. Is it time for the champagne wine?"

"Well past. That's why I came looking for you. I went to a lot of trouble to get this champagne wine for the party, and Forrester will damn well get up and drink some to show the rest of us how it's done."

"You tilt," said Forrester, "and you pour."

Hara looked at him more carefully, shook his head and fingered his joymaker. "Don't you remember anything I tell you?" he chided, and sprayed Forrester with what felt for a moment like an invigorating, and not at all shocking, ice-cold shower. "Not too drunk tonight. Get adjusted. Do what I tell you, will you? And now let's see about this champagne wine."

Forrester got up like an obedient child and trailed after Hara toward the dispensing tables, one arm around the girl. She had pale hair, up in a fluffy crown, and the tricks of the lighting made it look as though fireflies nested in it.

In the event that he ever saw Dorothy again, Forrester thought, he might have to give this sort of thing up. But for the time being it was very pleasant. And reassuring. It was hard for him to remember, when he had an arm around a pretty girl, that ninety days before his body had been a cryogenic crystal in an ambience of liquid helium, with his heart stopped and his brain still and his lungs a clot of destroyed scar tissue.

He popped the cork of the champagne like a good fellow, toasted and drank. He had never seen the label before, but it was

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champagne all right. At Hara's request he roared the verses of *The Bastard King of England* amid much applause, and would not let anyone sober him though he knew he was beginning again to reel and stammer. "You decadent sods," he bellowed amiably, "you know so much! But you don't know how to get drunk."

They were dancing, a linked circle of all twenty-odd of them with foot-stamping and sudden changes of direction, a little like a Morris dance, a little like a Paul Jones, to music like pizzicato cello and the piping of flutes. The girl cried, "Oh, Charles! Charles Forrester! You almost make an Arcadian of me!" He nodded and grinned and clung to her on his right, and to a huge creature in orange tights on his left, a man who, someone said, had just returned from Mars and was stumbling and straining in Earth's gravity. But he was laughing. Everyone was laughing. A lot of them seemed to be laughing at Forrester, perhaps at his clumsy attempts to follow the step.

That was almost the last he remembered. There was some shouting about what to do with him, a proposal to sober him up, a veto, a long giggling debate while he nodded happily like a whiskered head on a spring. He did not know when the party ended. He had a dreamlike memory of the girl leading him across an empty way between tall, dark structures like monuments, while he shouted and sang to the echoes. He remembered kissing the girl, and some vagrant aphrodisiac wisp from her joymaker that filled him with a confused emotion of mingled desire and fear. But he did not remember returning to his room or going to sleep.

And when he woke in the morning he was buoyant, rested, vigorous and alone.

II

The bed in which Forrester woke was oval, springy and gently warm. It woke him by purring faintly at him, soothingly and cheerfully. Then as he began to stir the purring stopped, and the surface beneath his body gently began to knead his muscles. Lights came on. There was a distant sound of lively music, like a Gypsy trio. Forrester stretched, yawned, explored his teeth with his tongue and sat up.

"Good morning, Man Forrester," said the bed. "It is eight-fifty hours and you have an appointment at nine seventy-five. Would you like me to tell you your calls?"

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"Not now," said Forrester at once. Hara had told him about the bed. It did not startle him. It was a convenience, not a threat. It was one more comfortable part of this very amiable world.

Forrester, who had been thirty-seven years old when he was burned to death and still considered that to be his age, lit a cigarette, considered his situation carefully and decided that it was a state unmatched by any other thirty-seven year old man in the history of the world. He had it made. Life. Health. Good company. And a quarter of a million dollars.

He was not, of course, as unique as he thought. But as he had not yet fully accepted the fact that he had himself been dead and was now returned to life, much less that there were millions upon millions like him, it *felt* unique. It felt very good.

"I have just received another message for you, Man Forrester," said the bed.

"Save it," said Forrester. "After I have a cup of coffee."

"Do you wish me to send you a cup of coffee, Man Forrester?"

"You're a nag, you know that? I'll tell you what I want and when I want it."

What Forrester really wanted, although he had not articulated it even to himself, was to go on enjoying for a moment the sensation of being uncommitted. It was like a liberation. It was like that first week of basic training, in the Army, when he realized that there was a hard way to get through this hitch and an easy one, and that the easy one, which entailed making no decisions of his own and taking no initiative, but merely doing what he was told, was like nothing so much as a rather prolonged holiday in a somewhat poorly equipped summer camp for adults.

Here the accommodations were in fact sumptuous. But the principle was the same. He did not have to concern himself with obligations. He had no obligations. He didn't have to worry about making sure the kids got up for school, because he no longer had any children. He didn't have to think about whether his wife had enough money to get through the day, because he didn't now have a wife. If he wanted to, he could now roll over, pull the covers over his head and go to sleep. No one would stop him, no one would be aggrieved. If he chose, he could get drunk, attempt the seduction of a girl or write a poem. All of his debts were paid —or forgiven, centuries since. Every promise was redeemed— or had passed beyond the chance of redemption. The lie he had

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told Dorothy about that weekend in 1962 need trouble him no longer. If the truth now came out, no one would care; and it was all but impossible that the truth should ever come out.

He had, in short, a blank check on life.

More than that, he had a pretty substantially underwritten guarantee of continuing life itself. He wasn't sick. He wasn't even threatened; even the lump on his leg, which he had once or twice gazed on with some worry in the days before his death, could not be malignant or threatening, for if it were the doctors at the dormer would have fixed it. He need not even worry about being run over by a car—if there were cars—since at worst that might mean only another few centuries in the bath of liquid helium, and then back to life—better than ever!

He had, in fact, everything he had ever wished for.

The only things he didn't have were those he had not wished for because he already had them . . . e.g., family. Friends. Status.

In this life of the year 2527 A.D., Charles Forrester was entirely free. But he was not so joyous as to be blinded to the fact that this coin of his treasure had two sides. Another way of looking at it was that he was entirely superfluous.

"Man Forrester," said the bed, "I must insist. I have both an urgent-class message and a personal-visit notice." And the mattress curled under him, humped itself and deposited him on the floor of the room.

Staggering, Forrester growled, "What's urgent?"

"A hunting license has been taken out on you, Man Forrester. The licensee is Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major, male, dipara-Zen, Utopian, eighty-six elapsed, six feet four inches, import-export. He is extraterrestrial-human. No reason declared. Bonds and guaranties have been posted. Would you like your coffee now?"

While the bed was speaking it had been rolling itself into a wall. It disappeared into a sphincter that closed and left no trace. It was disconcerting, but Forrester remembered Hara's instructions, searched for and found his joymaker, and said to it: "I would like my breakfast now. Ham and eggs. Toast and orange juice. Coffee, and a pack of cigarettes."

"They will be delivered in five minutes, Man Forrester," said the joymaker. "May I give you the rest of your messages?"

"Wait a minute. I thought it was the bed that was giving me

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"We are all the same, Man Forrester. Your messages follow: Notice of personal visit: Taiko Hironibi will join you for breakfast. Dr. Hara has prescribed a euphoric in case of need, which will be delivered with your breakfast. Adne Bensen sends you a kiss. First Merchants Audit & Trust invites your patronage. Society of Ancients states you have been approved for membership and relocation benefits. Ziegler, Durant and Colfax, attornies—"

"You can skip the commercials. What was that about a hunting license?"

"A hunting license has been taken out on you, Man Forrester. The licensee is Heinzlichen Jura de—"

"You said that. Wait a minute." Forrester regarded his joymaker thoughtfully. The principle of it was clear enough. It was a remote input-output station for a shared-time computer program, with certain attachments which functioned as pocket flask, first-aid kit, cosmetic bag and so on. It looked something like a mace, or a jester's scepter. Forrester told himself that it was really no less natural to talk to something like a mace than it was to talk into something like a telephone. But at the other end of a telephone had been a human being . . . or at least, he reminded himself, the taped voice of what at one time had been a human being . . . anyway, it didn't *feel* natural. He said guardedly: "I don't understand all this. I don't know who these people are who are calling me up, either."

"Man Forrester, the personal callers are as follows. Taiko Hironibi: Male, dendritic Confucian, Arcadian, fifty-one elapsed, six feet one inch, organizer, business political. He will bring his own breakfast. Adne Bensen: Female, Universalist, Arcadian-trimmer, twenty-three declared, five feet seven inches, experiencer-homeswoman, no business stated. Her kiss follows."

Forrester did not know what to expect but was pleasantly ready for anything.

What he got was indeed a kiss. It was disconcerting. No kissing lips were visible. There was a hint of perfumed breath, then a pressure on his lips—warm and soft, moist and sweet.

Startled, he touched his mouth. "How the devil did you do that?" he shouted.

"Sensory stimulation through the tactile net, Man Forrester. Will you receive Taiko Hironibi?"

"Well," said Forrester, "frankly I don't know. Oh, hell. I guess so. Send him in . . . Wait a minute. Shouldn't I get dressed?"

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"Do you wish other clothing, Man Forrester?"

"Don't confuse me. Just hold on a minute," he said, rattled and angry. He thought for a minute. "I don't know who this Hirowhatsis is—"

"Taiko Hironibi, Man Forrester. Male, dendritic Confucian—"

"Cut that out!" Forrester was breathing hard. Abruptly the joymaker in his hand hissed and sprayed him with something that felt damp for a second, then dissipated.

Forrester felt himself relaxing.

"Oh, *God*," he said, "what do I care who he is? Go ahead. Send him in. And get a move on with my breakfast, will you?"

"You'll do!" cried Taiko Hironibi. "The greatest! What a cranial index! You look, cripes, I don't know what to call it, you look like a brain. But a swinger."

Charles Forrester, gravely and cheerfully, indicated a seat with his hand. "Sit down. I don't know what you want but I'm willing to talk about it." He was pretty sure that the joymaker had given him some kind of a tranquilizer, but he didn't mind. "Sit down, Taiko," he said. "You're the damnedest looking Japanese I ever saw."

"Really?" The man looked disconcerted. He also looked quite non-Japanese: crew-cut golden hair, blue eyes. "They change you around so," he said apologetically. "Maybe I used to look different. Say! Did I get here first?"

"You got here before my breakfast even."

"Great! That's really great. Now, here's the thing. We're all messed up here, you have to get that straight right away. The people are sheep. They know they're being expropriated, but do they do anything about it? Sweat, no, they sit back and enjoy it. That's what we're for in the Ned Lud Society. I don't know your politics, Charley—"

"I used to be a Democrat, mostly."

"—Well, you can forget that. It doesn't matter. I'm registered Arcadian myself, of course, but a lot of guys are Trimmers, maybe —" he winked — "maybe even something a little worse, you know? We're all in this together. Affects everybody. If you raise your kids with machines you're bound to have machine-lovers growing up, right? Now—"

"Hey!" said Forrester, looking at his wall. At a point as near as he could remember just about where the bed had disappeared, a sphincter was opening again. It disgorged a table set for two,

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one side bearing his breakfast, the other a complete setting but no food.

"Ah, breakfast," said Taiko Hironibi. He opened a pouch in the kilt-like affair he wore and took out a small capped bowl, a plastic box which turned out to contain something like crackers and a globe which, squeezed, poured a hot, watery, greenish tea into the cup at his place. "Care for a pickled plum?" he asked politely, removing the cap from the bowl.

Forrester shook his head. Chairs had appeared beside the table, and he slid into the one placed before the ham and eggs.

Next to the steaming plate was a small crystal tray containing a capsule and a scrap of golden paper on which was written:

> I don't know about that champagne wine. Take this if you have a hungover.
>
> Hara

To the best of Forrester's knowledge he didn't have a hangover, but the capsule looked too good to waste. He swallowed it with some of the orange juice and at once felt even more relaxed. If that were possible. He felt positively affectionate toward the blond Japanese, now decorously nibbling at a dark, withered object.

It crossed Forrester's mind that the capsule, plus what the joymaker had sprayed him with, might add up to something larger than he was ready for. He felt almost giddy. Better guard against that, he thought, and demanded as unpleasantly as he could: "Who sent you here?"

"Why—the contact was Adne Bensen."

"Don't know her," snapped Forrester, trying not to grin.

"You don't?" Taiko stopped eating, dismayed. "Sweat, man, she told me you'd be—"

"Doesn't matter," cried Forrester, and prepared for the killing question he had been saving. "Just tell me this. What's the advantage of my joining your society?"

The blond man was clearly disgruntled. "Listen, I'm not *begging* you. We got something good here. You want in, come in. You want out, go."

"No, don't give me an argument. Just answer the question." Forrester managed to light a cigarette, puffed smoke in Taiko's face. "For instance," he said, "would it be money that's involved?"

"Well, sure. Everybody needs money, right? But that's not the only thing—"

Forrester said, politely but severely, restraining the impulse to giggle: "You know, I had an

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idea it would be like that. Well, thanks. You better be going now, Hironibi. I'll think over what you said and maybe we can get together some time. But don't you call me. Let me call you." And he bowed Taiko to the door and watched it close behind him, face straight until the Japanese was gone.

Then Forrester bent over and howled with laughter. "Come man!" he shouted. "Think I'm an easy mark!"

"I do not understand, Man Forrester," said the joymaker. "Are you addressing me?"

"Not in this life," Forrester told the machine, still chuckling. He might *look* like a country cousin, but there was one sharper who had got no farther than first base.

He wondered who this Adne Bensen was, who had fingered him for the swindler and sent him an electronic kiss. If she kissed in person like she kissed through sensory stimulation of the tactile net she might be worth knowing. And no problem, either. If Taiko was the worst this century could turn up, Forrester thought with pleasure and joy, his quarter of a million dollars was safe!

Twenty minutes later he found his way to the street level of the building, not without arguments from this joymaker. "Man Forrester," it said, sounding almost aggrieved, "it is better to take a taxi! Do not walk. The guaranties do not apply to provocation and contributory negligence."

"Shut up for a minute, will you?" Forrester managed to get the door open and looked out.

The city of 2527 A.D. was very large, very fast-moving and very noisy. Forrester was standing in a sort of driveway, a clump of ethereal, thirty-foot-high ferns in front of him partially making a twelve-lane highway packed to its margins with high-speed traffic in both directions. Occasionally a vehicle would cut in to the entrance to his building, pause before him for a moment and then move on. Taxis? Forrester wondered. If so, he was giving them no encouragement.

"Man Forrester," said the joymaker, "I have summoned death-reversal equipment but it will not arrive for several minutes. I must warn you the costs may be challenged under the bonding regulations."

"Oh, shut up." It seemed to be a warm day, and Forrester was perhaps still slightly befuddled; the temptation to walk was irresistible. All questions could be deferred. Should be deferred, he told himself. Obviously his first task was to get himself oriented.

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And—he prided himself—he had been something of a cosmopolitan, back in those days before his death, as at home in San Francisco or Montreal as in New York or Chicago. And he had always made time to stroll around a city.

He would stroll this one now. Joymakers be damned, thought Charles Forrester, right-faced, hooked the joymaker to his belt and set off along a narrow pedestrian walk.

There were very few walkers. It didn't do to make snap judgments, Forrester thought, but these people seemed soft. Perhaps they could afford to be. No doubt someone like himself, he considered soberly, seemed like a hairy troglodyte, crude, savage and flint-axed.

"Man Forrester," cried the joymaker from his belt, "I must inform you that Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major has waived protest of the bonding regulations. The death-reversal equipment is on its way." He slapped it and it was quiet, or if it continued to bleat at him it was drowned out by the sound of the clamoring traffic. Whatever drove these cars it was not gasoline. There were no fumes. There was only a roar of air and singing tires, multiplied by hundreds and unending. The trafficway lay between tall, bright buildings, one a soft, glowing orange, one the crystalline blue-gray color of fractured steel. In the court of a building across the trafficway he could see, dimly through the glass and the momentary gaps in the traffic, a riot of plant growth with enormous scarlet fruits. On a balcony above him scented fountains played.

The joymaker was addressing him again, but he could only catch part of it. "—on station now, Man Forrester." A shadow passed over him and he looked up.

Overhead a white aircraft of some sort—it had no wings—was sliding diagonally down toward him.

It bore a glittering ruby insigne like the serpent staff of Aesculapius on its sides. The nearer end of it was all glass and exposed, and inside a young woman in crisply tailored blue was drowsily watching something on a screen invisible to Forrester. She looked up, gazed at him, spoke into a microphone, glanced at him again and went back to watching her screen. The vehicle took position over his head and waited, following with him as he walked.

"That's funny," said Forrester aloud.

"It's a funny world," said somebody quite near him.

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He turned around. Four men were standing there, looking at him with pleasant, open expressions. One of them was very tall and very heavy. In fact, he was gross. He leaned on a cane, studying Forrester, his expression alert and interested.

Forrester realized that he was the one who had spoken and, in the same moment, realized that he knew him. "Oh, sure," he said. "The Martian in orange tights."

"Very good," said the Martian, nodding. He was not in orange tights now; he wore a loose white tunic and slate-gray shorts. He wasn't really a Martian, Forrester remembered; at least, his ancestors had come from Earth.

One of the other men took Forrester's hand and shook it. "You're the one with a quarter of a million dollars," he said. "Look me up when this is all over. I'd like to know what a fellow like you thinks of our world."

He brought his knee up and kicked Forrester in the groin. Hard.

Forrester felt the world explode, starting inside him. He saw that the man was stepping back, looking at him with interest and pleasure; but it was hard to watch him because the city was moving. It tilted up at an angle and the sidewalk struck him on the forehead. He rolled, clutching at his testicles, and found himself looking upward.

The man from Mars said conversationally, "Don't hurry. Plenty of time for everybody." He lifted his cane and limped forward. It was quite an effort for him in Earth's gravity, after Mars, Forrester saw. The cane came down on his shoulder and upper arm, was lifted and came down again, regularly, slowly and strongly. It must have been weighted. It felt like a baseball bat.

The pain in Forrester's gut was like death. His arm was numb.

All in all, though, he realized quite clearly—unable to move, watching as they passed the cane from hand to hand and the white aircraft hovered overhead, the woman's face peering patiently down—all in all, it was hurting rather less than he might have expected. Perhaps it was Hara's hungover medicine. Perhaps it was just shock.

He tried to speak, but his lungs were not working.

He saw that someone was running toward them, someone with a black face under a green beret, but he could not keep his eyes open.

He could not quite lose consciousness either, though he wanted to very much. Perhaps

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that was Hara's euphoric pill too. Then he felt that he was succeeding. The pain in his belly grew alarmingly, and began to recede again, and then felt nothing at all, or nothing physical.

But there was something painful in his mind, something that whimpered. *Why? Why me?*

III

Howls of laughter rolled over Forrester. A girl was screaming, "He's spinning it! He's spinning it! Gee. I think I saw the cartridge!"

Forrester opened his eyes. He was in something that lurched and hummed. A girl in a tailored blue suit, her back to him, was staring at what seemed to be a window opening on a sort of arena, where the screaming girl, face flushed and happy, stamping with excitement, was standing over a blindfolded man with a gun.

Forrester's aches and bruises reminded him at once of what had happened. He was surprised that he was still alive. He croaked, "Hey!"

The girl in the tailored blue looked over her shoulder at him. "You're all right," she said. "Just take it easy. We'll be there in a minute."

"Where?"

Impatiently she moved her hand. The arena with the man and girl disappeared — just as the man seemed to be raising the gun — and Forrester found himself looking at blue sky and clouds. "Lift up a little," the girl in blue said. "You'll see it. There."

Forrester tried to raise himself on an elbow, caught a glimpse of trees and rambling pastel buildings and fell back. "I can't lift myself up! Damn it, I've been half killed." He became aware that he was on a sort of stretcher, and that there was another one beside him. The other one was also occupied, by someone with a sheet over him. "Who's that?" he cried.

"How would I know? I just bring them in, I don't write their life stories. Now relax or I'll have to put you to sleep."

"You silly bitch," said Forrester precisely. "I'm not going to stand for this. I demand that you — Wait a minute! What are you doing?"

The girl had turned around, and she was holding something very like his joymaker, pointed at him. "Are you going to shut up and lie still?"

"I warn you! Don't you dare!"

She sighed and something cool touched his face.

Forrester gathered all his strength to tell her what he

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thought of her, her probable sex life and this world of hers, in which arbitrary and unpleasant things were done to well to do men like himself. He couldn't. All that came out was, "Arr, a-r-r-r." He was not unconscious, but he was very weak.

The girl said, "You weep me, greenie. You are a greenhorn, aren't you? I can always tell. You people wake up in the dormer and you think you're God's own sweat. Mother! Sure you're alive. Sure you've had the biggest break you can imagine. But do you think *we* care?"

All this time the aircraft was slipping and turning, coming in for a landing. The girl, who one would have thought to be the pilot, paid no attention. She was very cross. She said, "Now, I know my job, and my job is to keep you alive, or keep you safely dead till they can take care of you. I don't have to talk to you."

Forrester said, "A-r-r-r."

"I don't even like you," she said with vexation, "and you've made me miss my favorite program. Oh, go to sleep."

And she raised the joymaker again, just as Forrester felt the aircraft touch ground, and he did.

At the temperature of liquid helium chemistry stops.

On this fact, and one reasonable hope, the largest industry of the late twentieth century had been built.

The reasonable hope was that the progress of medicine in past years would be matched by similar progress in the future — so that no matter what a person might die of, at some future time a way would be found to cure it, to repair it, or at least to make it irrelevant to continuing life and activity. (Including a method of repairing the damage due to freezing to that temperature.)

The fact was that freezing stopped time.

And the industry was Immortality, Inc.

In the city of Shoggo in which Forrester had awakened, a city which was nearly nine hundred years old and enormous, a thousand acres of park along a lakefront had humped themselves into a hill. All around was flat. The hill itself was an artifact. It was, as a matter of fact, the freezing center for that part of the world.

A hundred and fifty million cubic yards of earth had been eaten out of the ground to make a cold-storage locker for people. When the locker was built, most of the dirt was heaped back on top of it for insulation.

The differential in temperature between ground level and the heart of the frozen hill was near-

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ly five hundred degrees, Fahrenheit, or three hundred and more in the Kelvin scale on which the dormer operated.

When Forrester realized where the white aircraft had taken him he was instantly submerged in a terror he could not express. Beginning to awaken, he was still terribly weak, as though one of those sprays from the girl's joy-maker had shorted out ninety per cent of his volitional muscle control. (As in fact it had) He saw the bright featureless ceiling overhead and heard the moan and click of the thousand frightening instruments that brought people back to life, and fugued into a terrifying certainty that they were going to freeze him again. He lay there, groaning inarticulately, while things were done to him.

But they were not freezing him.

They were just patching him up. The blood was washed away. The bruises were scrubbed with something metallic, then touched with a transparent stiff jelly in a long silvery tube that looked something like a large lipstick. His left thigh was pressed for a moment between two glowing screens which he knew to be a sort of X-ray, and a fine wash of something that glistened wet and dark was painted over his heart.

This last thing made him feel better, whatever it was. He found that he was able to speak.

"Thank you," he said.

The young-looking, red-faced man who was working over him at that moment nodded casually, touched Forrester's navel with the end of a silvery probe, glanced at it and said, "All right, I guess we're through with you. Get up and let's see if you can walk to Hara's office."

Forrester swung his legs out of the sort of low-walled crib he was in and found he could walk as well as ever. Even his bruises didn't hurt, or not much, although already he could detect what seemed to be the beginning return of pain.

The red-faced man said, "You're fine. Stay out of here for a while, will you? And don't forget to see Hara, because you're in some kind of trouble." He turned away as Forrester started to ask questions. "How would I know what kind? Just go see Hara."

A slim green arrowhead skipped along the floor ahead of him, guiding him to Hara's office, but actually Forrester thought he could have found it without the guide that had been provided. Once he left the emergency rooms he was in the part of the dormer he remembered.

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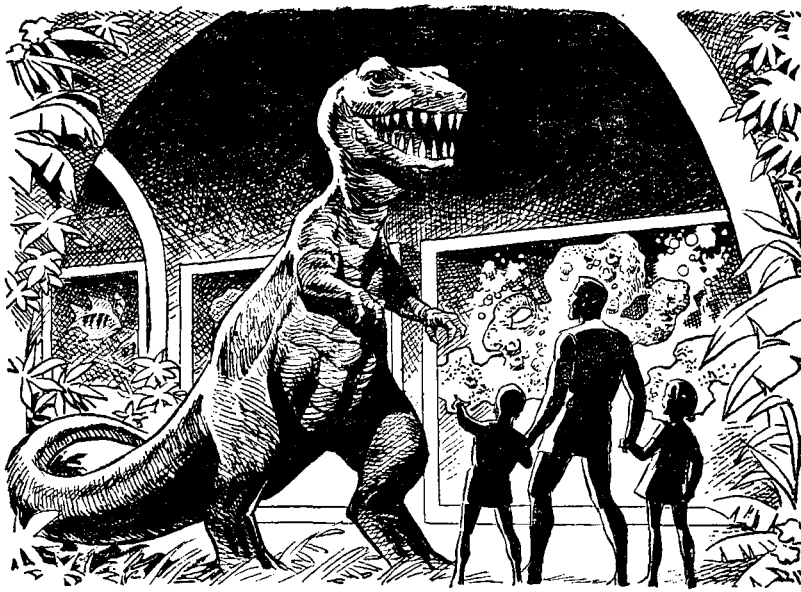

Here he had wakened out of a frozen sleep that lasted half a milennium. There he had gone every day for a week for bathing in some sort of light, warm oil that had vibrated and tingled, and made him feel drowsy but stronger each day. It was on the level below this that he had done his exercises, and in the building across the bed of poinsettias (except that these poinsettias were bright gold) that he had slept.

He wondered what had become of the rest of what he thought of as his graduating class. The thawed Lazaruses were processed in batches — fifty at a clip, at least in his group — and although he had not spent much time with any of them there was something about this shared experience that had made him know them quickly.

But when they were discharged they all went in separate directions, apparently for policy reasons. Forrester regretted they had lost touch.

Then he laughed out loud. A blue-jacketed woman, walking toward him along the hall and talking into an instrument on her wrist, looked up at him with curiosity and faint contempt. "Sorry," he said to her, still chuckling, as the green beacon of light turned a corner and he followed He didn't doubt he looked peculiar. He felt peculiar.

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He was missing these fellow-graduates of the freezatorium with the fond, distant detachment of his high-school class. Yet it was less than forty-eight hours since he had been with them.

A busy forty-eight hours, he thought. A bit frightening, too. Even wealth was not as secure a buffer against this world as he had thought.

The flickering green light led him into Hara's office and disappeared.

Hara was standing at the door, waiting for him. "Damned kamikaze," he said amiably, "can't I trust you out of my sight for a minute?"

Forrester, who had never been a demonstrative man, seized his hand and shook it. "Jesus, I'm glad to see you! I'm mixed up. I don't know what the hell is going on, and —"

"Just stay out of trouble, will you? Sit down." Hara made a seat come out of the wall, and a bottle out of his desk. He thumbed the cork expertly and poured a drink for Forrester, saying, "I expected you under your own power this morning, you know. Not in a DR cart. Didn't the center warn you somebody was after you?"

"Positively not!" Forrester was both startled and indignant. "What do you mean, after me? I had no idea —"

Then tardily recollection dawned. "Unless," he finished thoughtfully, "that's what the joymaker was mumbling about. It was all about bonds and guaranties and somebody named Heinz-something of Syrtis Major. That's on Mars, isn't it? *Say*." Recognition hardily dawned.

"Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major," Hara supplied, toasting Forrester with his glass and taking a tiny sip of the drink. Forrester followed suit; it was champagne. Hara sighed and said, "I don't know, Charlie, but I don't think I'll acquire a taste for this stuff after all."

"Never mind that! The Martian! The fellow in orange tights! He's the one who beat me up, he and his gang!"

Hara looked faintly puzzled. "Why, of course."

"And then," said Forrester, working it out in his mind, "there was this colored fellow. I mean, Negro. I guess he was a Negro — Anyway, he came along."

"There was," said Hara, "another man brought in with you. Let's see. Graphite-gray. Hair, black, kinked. Eyes brown. Is that what you mean?"

"Sure. I think he was trying to help me."

"Oh," Hara said, "there's no doubt of that. Messed things up for fair, he did. He's in the freezer now. They killed him. Nitro-

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gen batch — we're just holding him until we get parts. There's a compatibility problem, so it might be a week or two . . ."

"*Killed* him?"

Forrester tipped up his ruby-crystal glass and drained the champagne—heaven knew where Hara had found it, after Forrester had mentioned it as one of the great goods of the past — and it was by no means appropriate to the occasion. It tickled his nose.

But at least it contained alcohol, which Forrester felt he needed.

He said humbly, "Please explain what happened."

"Sweat, Charles, where do I start? What did you do to Henzie?"

"Nothing! I mean — well, nothing, really. I might have stepped on his feet when we were dancing."

Hara said angrily, "A *Marsman?* You stepped on his *feet?*"

"What's so bad about that? I mean, even if I did. I'm not sure I did. Would you blow your stack about something like that?"

"Mars isn't Shoggo," Hara said patiently, "and anyway, maybe I would. Depends. Did you read your orientation book?"

"Huh?"

"The book of information about the year 2527. You got it when you were discharged here."

Forrester searched his memory. "Oh, that. Maybe I left it at the party."

"Well, that computes," Hara said with some disgust. "I mean figures. I'll see you get another one. Meanwhile, will you please try to bear in mind, first, that you're sort of my responsibility, second, that you don't know your way around? I'll see you get another copy of the book. Read it! Come back and see me tomorrow; I've got work to do now. On your way out stop at the discharge office and pick up your stuff."

He escorted Forrester to the door, turned, then paused.

"Oh. Adne Bensen sends regards. Nice girl. She likes you," he said, closed the door and was gone.

Forrester completed his processing and was released by the medical section, receiving as he left a neat white folder with his name imprinted in gold.

It contained four sets of documents. One was a sheaf of medical records, a second the book Hara had mentioned, slim and bronze-bound, with the title printed in luminous letters:

Your Guide to the 26th Century
(1970-1990 Edition)

A third was what seemed to

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be a legal paper of some kind. At least, it was backed with a sheet of stiff blue material that gave it the look of a subpoena. Forrester remembered that the doctor who had patched him up had spoken of trouble. This looked like being the trouble, although the words were either unfamiliar in context or totally meaningless:

> You, Charles Dalgleish Forrester, uncommitted, undeclared, elapsed thirty-seven years, unemployed-pending, take greeting and are directed. Requirement: To be present at Congruency Hearing, hours 1075, days 15, months 9 —

It had the authentic feel of legalese, he saw with dismay. Much of the face of the single sheet of paper the blue material enclosed was covered with a sort of angular, almost readable lettering—something like the machine script they used to put on checks, Forrester thought, and realized that that was no doubt what it was.

But it had a date on it, and as that date appeared to be a week or more away, as near as Forrester could figure, he tabled it with some relief and turned to the next and last item in the folder.

This was a financial statement. Attached to it was a crisp metallic slip with the same angular printing on it, but which Forrester recognized as a check.

He fingered it lovingly and puzzled out the amount.

It was made out to him, and it was for $231,057.56.

Forrester attempted to fold it — it sprang back like spring steel — and put it away flat in his pocket. It felt good there.

He was faintly puzzled by the fact that it was some twenty thousand dollars less than he had expected. But in terms of percentage the amount didn't seem very significant, and he was cheerfully reconciled to the opinion that this society, like all societies, would do doubt have some sort of taxes. Twenty grand was, after all, an amount he could well afford as a sort of initiation fee.

Feeling much more secure, he emerged into the sunlight and looked about him.

It was late afternoon. The sun was to his right. Slate-blue water stretched to his left. He was looking southward over the great pinnacled mass of the city.

Aircraft moved above it. Things crawled in its valleys. The sun picked out reflections from glass and metal and, although it was still daylight, the city was already exuding a building glow of neon and fluorescence.

There were at least ten mil-

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lion persons in Shoggo, Forrester knew. There were theaters and card parties and homes, places where he might find a friend or a lover. Or even an enemy. Down there was the girl who had kissed him last night—Tip—and the Martian and his gang, who had tried to kill him.

But where?

Forrester did not now where to begin.

Alive, healthy, with almost a quarter of a million dollars in his pocket, he felt out of things. Standing on a planet with a population of seventeen billion active human beings, and at least twice that number dreaming in the slow cold of the helium baths, he felt entirely alone.

From his belt the voice of the joymaker spoke up:

"Man Forrester. Will you take your messages?"

"Yes," said Forrester, disconcerted. "No. Wait a minute."

He took the last cigarette out of the pack he had got that morning, lit it, crumpled the pack and threw it away. He thought.

Owning a joymaker was a little like having a genie with three wishes. The thing's promptness and precision disconcerted him; he felt that it demanded equal certitude from himself and did not feel up to it.

He grinned to himself ruefully, admitting that he was being made self-conscious by what he knew really to be nothing but a radio connection with some distant lash-up of cold-state transistors and ferrite cores. He said finally:

"Look. You. I think what I ought to do is go back to my room and start over again from home base. What's the best way to get there?"

"Man Forrester," said the joymaker, "the best way to get to the room you occupied is by cab, which I can summon for you. However, the room is no longer yours. Will you accept your messages?"

"No. Wait a minute! What do you mean, no longer mine? I didn't check out."

But he paused and thought, and on consideration that didn't seem to matter much. He had left nothing there. No bag, no baggage. No personal possessions, not even a shaving brush — he wouldn't have to shave for a week or two anyway, Hara had told him.

All that he had put of himself into that room was the garments he had worn last night. And those, he remembered, were disposable . . . and had therefore no doubt been disposed of.

"What about the bill?" he asked.

"The charge was paid by the West Annex Discharge Center.

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It is entered on your financial statement, Man Forrester. Your messages include one urgent, two personal, one notice of legal, seven commercial —"

"I don't want to hear right now. Wait a minute."

Once again Forrester tried to frame the right question.

He abandoned the effort. Whatever his skills, he was not a computer programmer and it was no good trying to talk like one. It seemed absurd to ask a machine for value judgments, but —

"Cripes," he said, "tell me something. What would you do, *right now*, if you were me?"

The joymaker answered without hesitation, as though that sort of question were coming up every day. "If I were you, Man Forrester, which is to say if I were human, just unfrozen, without accommodations, lacking major social contacts, unemployed, unskilled —"

"That's the picture, all right," Forrester agreed. "So answer the question." Something was crawling underfoot. He stepped aside, out of its way, a glittering metal thing.

"I would go to a tea shop, Man Forrester. I would then read my orientation book while enjoying a light meal. I would then think things over. I would then —"

"That's far enough."

The metal thing, apparently espying Forrester's discarded cigarette pack, scuttled over to it and gobbled it down. Forrester watched it for a second, then nodded.

"You've got some idea, machine," he said. "Take me to a tea shop!"

IV

The joymaker procured a cab for Forrester — a wingless vehicle like the death-reversal equipment that had brought him in for repair, but orange and black instead of white; it looked like Hallowe'en. And the cab took him to the joymaker's recommendation for a tea shop.

The shop was curious. It was located in an interior hall of a great, spidery building in the heart of the city. The cab flew in under a pierced-steel buttress, actually into a sort of vaulted opening at least fifty feet above ground.

It halted and hovered before a balcony planted with climbing roses, and Forrester had to step over a knife-edge of empty space. The cab did not quiver, not even when his weight left it.

A girl with hair like transparent cellophane greeted him. "I have your reservation, Man Forrester. Will you follow me, please?"

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He did, walking behind her across a quartz-pebbled court and into the hall that was the tea room, admiring the swing of her hips and wondering just what it was that she did to her hair to make it stand out like a sculptured puffball and rob it of opacity.

She seated him beside a reflecting pool, with silvery fish swimming slowly about. Even with the peculiar hairdo, she was a pretty girl. She had dimples and dark, amused eyes.

He said, "I don't know what I want, actually. Anyway, who do I order from?"

"We are all the same, Man Forrester," she said. "May I choose for you? Some tea and cakes?"

Numbly he nodded turned and as she turned and left watched the sway of her hips with antirely different kind of interest.

He sighed. This was a confusing world!

He took the book out of the folder he had been given at the West Annex Discharge Center and placed it on the table. Its cover was simple and direct:

Your Guide to the 26th Century
(1907-1990 Edition)
— Where to Go
— How to Live
— Managing Your Money
— Laws, Customs, Folkways

It was edge-indexed with helpful headings: Making Friends; Living on a Budget; How to Get the Most Out of Your Joymaker; Job Opportunities; Where to Get Needed Training . . . it went on and on. Forrester, flipping through the pages, was astonished to find how many of them there were.

He had a good week's reading here, he estimated. Obviously the first thing to do was for him to decide what was the first thing to do.

Making friends could wait a bit. He seemed already to have made more friends — and enemies! — than he could assimilate.

Living on a budget? He smiled to himself and patted the pocket that held his check.

How to get the most out of your joymaker, though. That was a good place to start, thought Forrester, opened the book to the right page and began to read.

The remote-access computer transponder called the "joymaker" is your most valuable single possession in your new life. If you can imagine a combination of telephone, credit card, alarm clock, pocket bar, reference library and full-time secretary, you will have sketched some of

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the functions provided by your joymaker.

Essentially it is a transponder connecting you with the central computing facilities of the city in which you reside on a shared-time self-programming basis. "Shared-time" means that many other joymakers use the same central computer — in Shoggo, something like ten million of them. If you go to another city your joymaker will continue to serve you, but it must be reset to a new frequency and pulse-code. This will be done automatically when you travel by public transportation. However, if you use private means, or if for any reason you spend any time in the agricultural areas, you must notify the joymaker of your intentions. It will inform you of any steps you must take.

"Self-programming" means that the programmed software includes —

The self-programming, shared-time girl with the dark, grave eyes brought Forrester his tea and cakes. "Thank you," he said, staring at her. He was still not quite sure of his deductions about her. He tried an experiment. "Can you give me my messages?" he asked.

"Certainly, Man Forrester, if you wish," she said promptly. "Alfred Guysman wishes to see you on political business. Reverend Sam Tshumu wishes to see you on religious business, but is at present not available and will contact you later. Adne Bensen asks you to return her message of this morning. The Nineteenth Chromatic Trust informs you that arrangements have been made for you to establish banking facilities with them—"

"That's enough," he said, marvelling at how nicely a shared-time transponder could be packaged. "I'll take the rest later."

There was no sugar for the tea, but it was physically hot and chemically cool at the same time — rather like a mentholated cigarette, except that there was no particular taste associated with it. Forrester returned to his book.

"Self-programming" means that the programmed software includes procedures for translating most normal variations of voice, idiom, accent and other variable modalities into a computer-oriented simscript and thence to the mathematical expressions on which the computers operate. As long as your personal joymaker is within reception range of your voice you may communicate via other shared-time transponders if you wish. Appropriate modulation will be established automatically. However, do not attempt to use another individual's joymaker when yours is not within range. Proper coding cannot be assur-

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ed. In the event that your joymaker is lost or damaged —

Forrester sighed and ate one of the cakes. It was rich with flavors like butter and cinnamon and others he could not identify. Pleasant but strange.

Very much like this world that had been given him.

"Man Forrester," said the joymaker at his belt, its tones muffled by his coat and the tablecloth, "it is necessary for you to accept some messages. I have a notice of personal visit and —"

Forrester said, "Look, I'm doing what you said, right? I'm reading my book. Let me figure it out a little before you throw messages at me. Unless," he said as an afterthought, "there's something that's life-and-death."

"There are no messages involving life or death, Man Forrester."

"Then wait a while." He was aware — he didn't know how long it had been going on — that a distant wind instrument was hooting faintly. Pleasant but strange. Spiced cool breezes blew from the paneled walls, also pleasant but strange.

He said hesitantly, "Joymaker, answer me a question. Why did what's-his-name, Heinzie, beat me up?"

"I cannot identify the individual, Man Forrester. You were beaten up by four persons in the one recorded incident of attack. Their names were Shlomo Cassavetes, Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major, Edwardino —"

"That one. Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major. Or, for that matter, all of them — why did they rumble me?"

"I have a priority message regarding Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major, Man Forrester. Perhaps it will be informative. May I give it to you?"

"Oh, hell. Why not?"

"Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major is protesting enforcement of guaranties and has enjoyed disbursements under his bond. You are notified, Man Forrester."

Forrester said hotly, "That's what you call informative? Look, skip the damned messages and answer the question. What was that scene all about?"

"You have asked three questions, Man Forrester. May I offer a synoptic reply?"

"Please do, old friend."

"Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major, a guest in the rep-rooms utilized by Alin Hara, conceived a grievance against you, cause unstated. Calling into association Shlomo Cassavetes, Edwardino Wry and Edwardeto Wry, they formed an ad hoc club and filed appropriate conformance in re-

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gard to bonds and guaranties. The intention was stated as murder, first phase, ad lib. The motivation was stated as grievance as to de Syrtis Major, practical joke as to the others. Conformances were recorded and the subject, that is, yourself, Man Forrester, was notified. Does that answer your three questions, Man Forrester?"

"What do you think?" Forrester snapped. "Well, maybe it does. Sort of. You mean those other three finks lumped me for a *joke*?"

"They so stated, yes, Man Forrester."

"And they're still running around loose?"

"Do you wish me to ascertain their present whereabouts, Man Forrester?"

"No, I mean, aren't they in jail or something?"

"No, Man Forrester."

Forrester said, "Joymaker, leave me alone for a while. I better get back to my orientation book. I see I don't know as much as I thought I did."

Forrester drank the rest of his tea, ate the rest of his cakes and plowed back into his book.

To use your joymaker as telephone: You must know the ortho-name and identification spectrum of the person you wish to reach. Once you have given this information to the joymaker it will be remembered and you can then refer to the person in later calls by a reciprocal name or any other personal identification programmed into your joymaker. If you have been called by any person, the joymaker will have recorded the necessary ortho-name and identification spectrum. Simply ask the joymaker to call the person you wish to speak to. If you wish to establish a priority rating with any person, that person must so inform his joymaker. Otherwise your calls may be deferred or canceled as directed by the called person.

To use your joymaker as credit card: You must know the institutional designation and account spectrum —

A belated thought percolated to the surface of Forrester's mind. Messages. Financial institutions. One of the messages had been from something that sounded like that.

He sighed and looked around the room. Most of the tables were empty. But it was a large room, and there were perhaps fifty other persons in it, all of them seated at tables in twos and threes and larger groups. Through some effect of the sound-conditioning he could not hear their voices, only the distant hooting flute and a faint splashing from the giant fish in the reflecting pools.

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He wondered if any of these fifty people would mind if he got up and walked over to them.

Touching the faintly sore spots on his shoulders and neck, he decided against it.

But it gave him an idea, and he turned to the section of the book on "Making Friends".

"I have an *urgent* notice of personal visit, Man Forrester," grumbled the joymaker from his waist.

"Just save it," said Forrester, preoccupied. He was startled at the length of the list of ways of making friends. Above all, there were clubs. Clubs in such profusion that he wondered even seventeen billion people could fill their rolls. Social clubs, gymnastic clubs, professional clubs. Political groups, religious groups, therapeutic groups. There was a Society of First Families of Mars, and a Loyal Order of Descendants of Barsoom Fans. There were forty-eight bird-watching groups in Shoggo alone. There were stamp-collectors and coin-collectors and tax-token collectors and jet-car transfer collectors.

There was something called the Society of Ancients which looked interesting, as it appeared to be an organization of persons like Forrester himself, revived from the dead heart of the freezers. Yet it was listed with such curiosities as the B.P.O.E. and the Industrial Workers of the World (Memorial Association) in small type at the end of the section.

Puzzling. If it existed at all, should it not have a membership in the billions?

Evidently, it did not, but . . .

"Man Forrester," shrilled the joymaker, "I must inform you of personal visitation by —"

"Wait a minute," said Forrester, suddenly looking up, startled.

There was a hint of perfume in the air.

Forrester put down his book, frowning.

The scent was familiar. What was it? Another tactile-tape message from this Adne Bensen, whoever she might be?

He felt a touch on his shoulder, then warm arms around him, a hug.

These tactile tapes were certainly convincing, he thought momentarily, then realized this was not a tape. He was not merely feeling and smelling the presence of the embracing arms. He saw them, from the corner of his eye, and awkwardly, like a wrestler struggling to break a hold, he turned inside them.

He saw the face of the girl from the party, very near to his.

"Tip!" he cried. "My God but I'm glad to see you!"

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When you came right down to it, Forrester hardly knew the girl, barring a little friendly kissing at a party, but at this moment she was very dear to him. It was like a chance meeting in Taiwan with somebody who sat at the far end of the commuter train for years. Not a friend. Hardly even an acquaintance; but promoted by the accident of unexpected meeting to the status of near and dear. He hugged her tight. She laughed breathlessly and shook free. "Dear Charles," she gasped, "not so *hard*."

"I'm sorry." He seated her and sank down opposite, admiring her dark hair and pale skin, her cheerful, pretty face and her figure. The others in the tea room, some of whom had turned to look at them, were losing interest and returning to their own affairs. Forrester said, "It's just that I'm so glad to see you, Tip."

She looked startled, then faintly reproving. "My name is Adne Bensen, dear Charles. Call me Adne."

"But last night Hara called you — oh!" he said, remembering. "Then you're the girl who has been sending me the messages."

She nodded.

"Very nice messages they were," he said. "Would you like some tea?"

She said, "Oh, I think not. I mean, not here, anyway. I came to see if you'd like to come to my place for dinner."

"*Yes!*"

She laughed, "You are such an impetuous man, Charles. Is that why they call you the kamikaze people? I mean, your century and all."

"As to that, Adne, I don't know," he said, "because, when you come right down to it, I don't know who calls me what. I am, you might say, confused. One of the many reasons why I am pleased to see you is that I need somebody to talk to."

She settled in a chair opposite him and took some tea, after all. It came without being asked for; apparently the joymaker had monitored their conversation and drawn the inferences any good waiter would draw. She threw back her filmy, puffy wrap — it had floated around her shoulders like a cloud, but it lay back against the chair quite inconspicuously, Forrester noticed — and revealed a deep-cut, tight-fitting, flesh-colored vest or jerkin of some sort that was startling at first.

At second look it was still startling.

She said, "Dear Charles. Don't you ask your joymaker things?"

"I would except I don't know what to ask."

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"Oh, anything! What do you want? Have you filed a profile?"

"I don't think so."

"Oh, do! Then it will tell you what programs are on, what parties you will be welcomed at, who you would wish to know. It's terrible to go on impulse, Charles," she said earnestly. "Let the joymaker help you."

He discovered that his own tea cup had been replenished, and sipped it. "I don't understand," he said. "You mean I should let the joymaker decide what I'm going to do for fun?"

"Of course. There's so *much*. How could you know what you would like?"

He shook his head. . . .

But that was all of that conversation, all for then. His joymaker said suddenly, its voice curiously tinny, "PRIORITY URGENT! THIS IS A DRILL! TAKE COVER! TAKE COVER! TAKE COVER!!"

"Oh, dear," said Adne, pouting. "Well let's go."

"TAKE COVER!" blared the joymaker again, and Forrester discovered the reason for its metallic sound. Not only his but the girl's, those of patrons at other tables, all the joymakers at once were repeating the same message. "TAKE COVER! COUNTDOWN STARTS NOW! ONE HUNDRED SECONDS. NINETY-NINE . . ."

"Where are you going?" Forrester asked, rising with her.

"To the shelter, of course! Hurry it up, Charles, will you? I hate it when I'm out in a public place in one of these things."

"—NINETY-ONE. NINETY. EIGHTY-NINE—"

He said, swallowing hard: "Air raid? A *war*?"

She had his hand, tugging him along toward an exit at the rear of the tea room, where the other patrons were already beginning to stream out. "Not exactly, Charles dear. Don't you know *anything*?"

"Then what?"

"Aliens. Monsters. That's all. Now hurry, or we'll never get a seat."

V

A walk, an elevator ride, a short stretch through a light-walled corridor, and they came out into a great shadowy auditorium. There was just enough light to find their way to seats. It was filling rapidly, and behind them Forrester heard heavy doors slamming.

When about three-quarters of the seats were filled a man in black climbed onto the stage and said, "Thank you all for your cooperation. I'm pleased to be able to tell you that this building has achieved four-nines compliance

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in exactly one hundred and forty-one seconds

There was a stir of interest from the audience. Forrester, craning his neck to find the source of the P.A. system — it seemed to murmur from all over the hall —located it at last as the man spoke again. It was his joymaker, and all the joymakers, repeating what the man said.

"This is one of the best showings we've ever had," he said warmly, "and I appreciate it. You may leave."

"You mean that's all there is to it?" Forrester asked the girl.

"That's all. Are you coming up to my place?"

He persisted, "But — if there's going to be a raid, or any chance of one, shouldn't we wait and see —"

"See what, Charles dear? There's no need to grovel in the ground like moles. It's just a test."

"Yes, but —" He hesitated, and followed her out of the auditorium thoughtfully.

It was confusing. No one had mentioned *war* to him.

But when he said as much to Adne, she laughed. "*War*? Oh, Charles! You're so *funny*, you kamikazes! Now we've wasted enough time — are you coming to my place for dinner or not?"

He sighed.

"Oh, sure," he said.

In the life that had begun with his birth in 1932 and ended with the inhalation of a lungful of flame thirty-seven years later, Forrester had been a successful, self-sufficient and substantial man.

He had a wife — her name was Dorothy, small, blonde, a little younger than himself. He had three sons, and a job as copy chief of a technical writing service, and a reputation among his friends as a fine poker player and useful companion.

Although he had missed participation in a war, he was a Boy Scout in World War II, participating in scrap-metal drives and Slap the Jap waste fat collections. As a young adult he had lived through the H-bomb hysteria of the early fifties, when every city street blossomed out with signs directing the nearest way to a bomb shelter. He had seen enough movies and television shows to know what air raid drills meant.

He was not very satisfied with the one he had seen. He tried to phrase his dissatisfaction to Adne as she changed clothes behind a screen, but she was not very interested. Drills were an annoyance to her, it was clear.

She came out from behind the screen, wearing something filmy and pale, and not at all practical for cooking dinner. On the other hand, Forrester thought,

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who knew how these people cooked their dinners? She rustled over to him, lifted his hand, kissed his fingers and sat down beside him, pulling her joymaker from the place by the arm of the chair where she had left it: "Excuse me, Charles dear," she said, and, to the joymaker; "Receiving messages."

Forrester could not hear what the joymaker said to her because she was holding it close to her ear and had evidently somehow turned the volume down—which he resolved to learn how to do. But he heard what she said to it, though it was largely incomprehensible: "Cancel. Hold Three. Comissary four, two as programmed, two A-varied." And, "That takes care of that," she said to him. "Would you like a drink?"

"All right." She lifted glasses out of the well of the—Forrester would have called it a cocktail table, and perhaps it was. He noticed her eyes were on a stack of parcels on a low table across the room. "Excuse me," she said, pouring a minty liquid for him and one for herself. "I just have to look at these things." She took a small sip of her drink and crossed to the packages.

Forrester decided he liked his drink, which was not sweet and made his nose tingle. "Been shopping?" he asked. Adne was taking out clothes, small packets which might have been cosmetics, some things like appliances.

"Oh, no, Charles dear. It's my job." She was preoccupied with a soft, billowy green thing, stroking it against her cheek thoughtfully. With a twist of her arms she threw it around her shoulders and it became a sort of Elizabethan ruff. "Like it, dear?"

"Sure. I mean, I guess I do."

"It's soft. Feel." She drew it over his face. It felt like fur, though its points thrust out again immediately they left his skin, looking starched and throny. "Or this," she said, taking it off and replacing it with what looked liked oiled silk in the box it came in, but on her shoulders disappeared entirely, except that it gave luster and color to her skin. "Or—"

"They're all beautiful," he said. "What do you mean, it's your job?"

"I'm a reacter," she said proudly. "Weighted nearly 50 million, with two-nines reliability."

"Which means?"

"Oh, you know. If I like things, chances are ninety-nine out of a hundred that the others will too."

"Fifty million of them?"

She nodded, flushed and pleased.

"And this is how you make a living?"

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"It's how I get rich," she corrected him. "Say!" She looked at him thoughtfully. "I wonder . . . Do you have any idea how many others like you have come out of the dormers? Maybe you could get a job doing the same thing I could ask."

He patted her hand, indulgent and amused. "No thanks," he said, carefully not to mention the fact that he was rich — although, he remembered dimly, he had been far less reticent about it at the party the night before. Well, he had made a lot of mistakes at the party — as witness his troubles with the Martian.

"I never asked," said Adne, putting the things away. "How did you die, Charles?"

"Why," he said, sitting down again and waiting for her to join him, "I died in a fire. As a matter of fact, I understand I was a hero."

"Really!" She was impressed.

"I was a volunteer fireman, you know, and there was an apartment fire one night—it was January, witchy cold, if you stood still in the spill water you'd freeze to the ground in two minutes — and there was a child in the upper part of the building. And I was the nearest one to the ladder."

He sipped his drink, admiring its milky, golden color. "I forgot my Air-Pak," he admitted. "The smoke got me. Or the combination did—smoke and heat. And maybe booze, because I'd just come from a party. Hara said I must have inhaled pure flame because my lungs were burnt. My face must have been, too, of course. I mean, you wouldn't know, but I don't think I look quite the same as I used to. A little leaner now, and maybe a little younger. And I don't think my eyes were quite as bright blue."

She giggled. "Hara can't help editing. Most people don't mind a few improvements."

Dinner had arrived as his breakfast had that morning, through a servadoor in the wall. Adne excused herself for a moment while the table was setting up.

She was gone more than a moment and came back looking amused. "That's that," she said without explaining. "Let's eat."

Of the foods served him Forrester was able to identify little or nothing. The textures were sort of Oriental, with crisp things like water chestnuts and gummy things like sukiyaki varying the crunch of lettuce and the plasticity of starches. The flavors were queer but palatable.

"You must have been one of the first to be frozen," she commented. "1969? That's only a few

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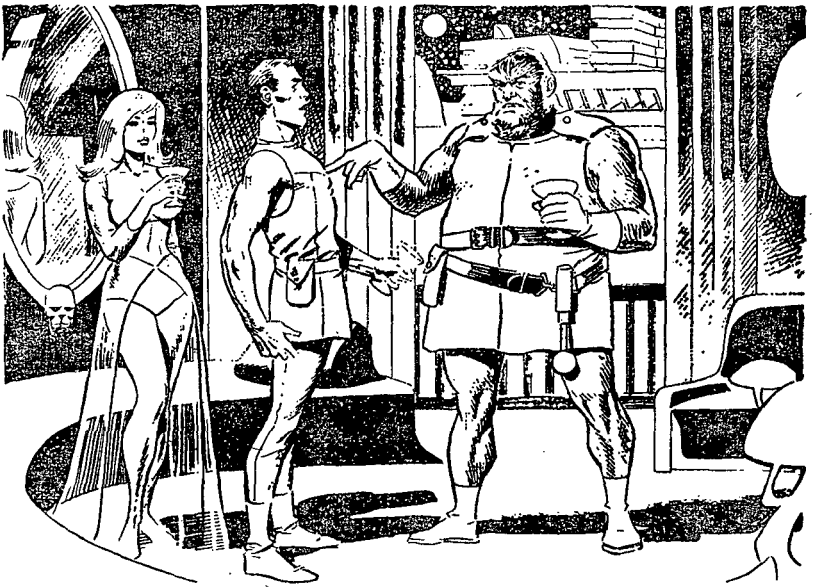

years after the freezing began."

"First on the book," he agreed. "It was because of the fire company, I guess. I know they had the new death - reversal truck standing by for several months, waiting for a victim. I didn't think I'd be the one to christen it. . ."

He ate a forkful of something like creamed onions in a pastry crust and said, "It must have been confusing for Dorothy."

"Your wife?"

He nodded. "I wonder if there's any way I can find out about her. What she did. How the children made out. She was young when I was killed — let's see. Thirty-three, about. I don't know if having a husband dead but frozen would let her marry again... hope she did . . . I mean—" He broke off, wondering what he did mean.

"Anyway," he said "Hara had some records. She lived nearly fifty more years, died in her eighties of the third massive stroke. She'd been partly paralyzed for some time." He shook his head, trying to visualize small, blonde Dorothy as a bedridden beldame.

"Had enough?" asked Adne.

He came back to present time, faintly startled. "Dinner? Why, I guess so. It was delicous." She did something that caused the table to retract itself and stood up. "Come over here and have

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your coffee. I ordered it specially for you. Would you like some music?"

He started to say, "Not particularly," but she had already started some with visions of Bartok and music-concrete. But it turned out to be something very like violins, playing something very like detached, introspective Tschaikowsky.

She sank back against him, and she was very warm and fragrant. "We'll have to find you a place to live," she said.

He put his arm around her.

"This is a condominum building," she said thoughtfully, "but I think there might be something. Do you have any preferences?"

"I don't know enough to have preferences," he said, caressing her soft hair. "In a place to live, anyway."

She said drowsily, "That's nice." And in the same tone, a moment later, "But I think I should warn you I'm natural-flow. And this is about M-day minus four, so all I want is to be cuddled." She yawned and touched her mouth with her hand. "Oh! Excuse me."

Then she caught a glimpse of his face. "You don't mind, do you?" she asked sitting up. "I mean, I could take a pill — Charles, why are you that color?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all!"

She said apologetically, "I'm sorry, but I don't know much about kamikaze ways. If there's a ritual tabu, I'm sorry."

"No tabu. Just a misunderstanding." He picked up his glass and held it to her. "Any more of this stuff around?"

"Charles dear," she said, stretching, "there's all you want. And I have an idea."

"Shoot."

"I'm going to find you a place to live!" she cried. "You just stay here. Order what you want." She touched something that he could not see and added, "If you don't know how, the children will show you while they're keeping you company."

What had seemed like a floor-length mural opened itself into a door. Forrester found himself looking into a bright gay room where two small children were racing each other around a sort of climbable maze.

"We ate our dinner, Mim," cried one of them, then saw Forrester and nudged the other. The two looked at him with calm appraisal.

"You don't mind this either, do you, Charles dear?" Adne asked. "That's another thing about being natural-flow."

There were two of them, a boy and a girl, about seven and five. Forrester guessed. They accepted him without question....

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Or not exactly that, thought Forrester ruefully. There were questions.

"Charles! Did people really *smell bad* in the old days?"

"Oh, Charles! You rode in *automobiles?*"

"When the little children had to work in the coal mines, Charles, didn't they get anything to *eat?*"

"But what did they *play* with, Charles? Dolls that didn't *talk?*"

He tried his best to answer. "Well, the child-labor time was over when I lived, or almost. And dolls did talk, sort of. Not very intelligently . . . . "

"When did you *live,* Charles?"

"I was burned to death in 1969—"

The little girl shrieked, "For *witchcraft?*"

"Oh, no. No, that was hundreds of years earlier too." Charles tried not to laugh. "You see, houses used to catch on fire those days—"

"The Shoggo fire!" shouted the boy. "Mrs. Leary's cow and the earthquake!"

"Well — something like that. Anyway, there were men whose job it was to put the fires out, and I was one of them. Only then I got caught and died there."

"Mim drowned once," the little girl bragged. "'*We* haven't died at all."

"You were sick once, though," said the boy seriously. "You could have died. I heard Mim talking to the medoc."

Forrester said, "Are you children in school?"

They looked at him, then at each other.

"I mean, are you old enough to start lessons?"

The boy said, "Well, *sure,* Charles. Tunt ought to be doing hers right now, as a matter of fact."

"So should you! Mim said —"

"We have to be polite to guests, Tunt!" The boy said to Charles. "Is there anything we can get you? Something to eat? Drink? Watch a program? Sex-stim? Although I guess you ought to know," he said apologetically, "that Mim's natural-flow and—"

"Yes, yes, I know about that," Forrester said hastily, and thought, Sweet God!

But being in Rome, he thought, it was what the Romans did that counted, and he would do his best. He resolved it earnestly.

It was like being at a party. You got there at ten o'clock, with your collar too tight and a little grouchy at being rushed and your starched shirt-front wet where the kids splashed it when you supervised their bedtime tooth-brushing. And your host was old Sam who'd been such a drag, and his wife Myra was in one of her nouveau-riche moods,

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showing off the new dishmaker, and the conversation started out about politics, which was Sam's most offensive side. . .

But then you had the second drink: And then the third. Faces grew brighter. You began to feel more at ease. The whole bunch laughed at one of your jokes. The music on the stack of records changed to something you could dance to. You began to catch the rhythm of the party . . .

Oh, I'll try vowed Forrester, joining the children in a sort of board game played against their own joymakers. I'll catch the mood of this age if it kills me. Again.

VI

Up betimes, and set out to conquer a world.

The home that Adne found for him was fascinating—walls that made closets as he needed them, windows that were not windows but something like television screens — Forrester resolutely spent no time exploring its marvels. After a disturbed night's sleep he was up and out, testing his new world and learning to cope with it. The children were marvelous. He begged the loan of them from Adne and they were his guides. They took him to the offices of the Nineteenth Chromatic Trust where a portly old Ebenezer Scrooge gravely examined Forrester's check, painstakingly showed him how to draw against it, severely supervised his signing the necessary documents to open an account, and only at the end revealed himself by saying, "Man Forrester, good day." They took him to a Titanian restaurant for lunch, a lark for them, a shattering test of nerve to him, for the Titanians ate only live food and he was barely able to cope with an aspic that writhed and rustled on his spoon. They showed him their playschool, where for three hours a week they competed and plotted with their peers (their lessons were learned at home, via their child-modified joymakers), and Forrester found himself playing London Bridge is Falling Down with fourteen children and one other adult, symbolically acting out the ritual murder and entombment in the bridge's foundations that the nursery rhyme celebrated. They took him to where the poor people lived, with half-fearful giggles and injunctions against speaking to *anyone,* and Forrester found himself out of pocket change, having given it all away to pale, mumbling creatures with hard-luck stories about Sol-burn on Mercury and freezer insurance firms that had gone bankrupt. They took him to a park — indoors,

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underground — where the landscaping was topologically grotesque and a purling stream flowed through a hill's base and up the other side, and ducks and frogs and a feathery sort of Venusian fish ate morsels of food the children tossed them. They took him to a museum where animated, enlarged cells underwent mitosis with a *plop* like a cow lifting her foot from a bog, and a recreated Tyrannosaurus Rex coughed and barked and thumped its feet clangorously, its orange eyes glaring straight at Forrester. They showed him all their treasures and pleasures. But they did not show him a factory, or an office building, or a store of any size. For it did not seem that any of these existed any more. They showed him all of Shoggo until their joymakers chided them, and Forrester's own said severely: "Man Forrester! The children must be returned for their naps. And you really must receive your messages."

The children looked at him with woe. "Ah, well," said Forrester, "we'll do it again another day. How do we get home from here?"

"A cab," said the girl doubtfully, but the boy shouted:

"Walk! We can walk! I know where we are. Ten minutes will do it. Ask your joymakers, if you don't believe me."

"I believe you," said Forrester.

"Then this way, Charles. Come on, Tunt." And the boy led off between two towering buildings, on the margin of a grassy strip where huge hovercraft swished by at enormous speeds.

The joymaker complained, "Man Forrester, I have dichotomous instructions. Please resolve them."

"Oh, God," said Forrester, tired and irritable. "what's your trouble now?"

"You have instructed me to hold messages, but I have several which are high-priority and urgent. Please reaffirm holding order, stipulating a time limit if possible, or receive them now."

The boy giggled. "You know why, Charles?" he demanded. "It tickles them. It's like if you have to go to the bathroom."

The joymaker said, "The analog is inexact, Man Forrester. However, please allow me to discharge my message load."

Forrester sighed and prepared to contemplate reality again. But something distracted him.

Besides the steady *whush, whush* of the passing hovercraft, besides the distant chant of a choir — they were passing some sort of church — there was another sound. Forrester looked up.

A faint tweeting sound of communications equipment was

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coming from a white aircraft, glass-fronted, hanging overhead. It bore the shining ruby caduceus, and a dark-skinned man in blue was regarding Forrester gravely.

Forrester swallowed.

"Joymaker," he demanded, "is that a death-reversal vehicle overhead?"

"Yes, Man Forrester."

"Does that mean — " He cleared his throat. "Does that mean that crazy Martian is after me again?"

"Man Forrester," said the joymaker primly, "among your urgent priority messages is a legal notice. The twenty-four hour hold period having expired and appropriate notices and action having been filed and taken, the man Heinzlichen Jura de —"

"Cut it out! Is he *after* me?"

"Man Forrester," said the joymaker, "yes. As of seventeen minutes ago, the hold period having expired then, he is."

At least the crazy Martian wasn't in sight, thought Forrester, scanning the few visible pedestrians. But the presence of the death-reversal aircraft was a poor omen.

"Kids," he said, "we got troubles. I'm being chased."

"Oh, Charles!" breathed the boy, fascinated. "Will you get *killed*?"

"Not if I can help it. Look. Do you know any short-cuts from here? Any secret ways — through cellars, over rooftops, you know."

The boy looked at the girl. The girl's eyes got very big.

"Tunt," she whispered. "Charles wants to *hide*."

"That's it," said Forrester. "What about it, son? You must know some special way. Any kid would."

The boy said, "Charles. I know a way, all right. But are you sure —"

"I'm sure. I'm sure!" snapped Charles Forrester. "Come on! Where?"

The boy surrendered. "Follow me. You too, Tunt."

They turned and dived into one of the buildings. Forrester took a last look around for Heinzlichen whatever-his-name-was. He was not in sight. Only the hovercraft thrumming past, and the few uncaring pedestrians . . . and overhead the man in blue in the death-reversal vehicle, staring down at him, his expression both surprised and angry.

When he was safely in the condominium building, the children returned to their own home to await the arrival of their mother, Forrester hurried to his apartment, closed the door and locked it.

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"Joymaker," he said, "you were right. I admit it. So now let's have all those messages. And take it slow."

The joymaker said serenely, "Man Forrester, your messages follow. The Reverend Sam Tshumu asked you to call him, but he is no longer receiving messages. Vincenzo d'Angostura states that he is still available for legal representation but will not call again under Bar Association rules. Taiko Hironibi feels there was some misunderstanding and would like to discuss it with you. Adne Bensen sends you an embrace. A document package is in your receiving chute. Will you receive the embrace?"

"Hold it a minute. Gives me something to look forward to. Who's this Reverend Sam Tshumu?"

"Sam Tshumu: Male, Christian entelechist, Utopian, five feet eight inches, proselytizer, business in regard to the assault on your person by Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major."

"Well. All right. What about it? What does he have to say?"

"I am sorry, Man Forrester. That ends the message."

"Can I call him back?"

"No, Man Forrester. Reverend Sam Tshumu is at present in freeze due to injuries sustained at the same time."

"That crazy Martian doesn't waste time, does he? Well, what about the other stuff? Any of it important?"

"As to that, Man Forrester, I have no parameters."

"You're a big help," said Forrester bitterly. "Get me a drink while I'm thinking. Uh, gin and tonic." He waited for it to appear and took a long pull.

His nerves began to feel like tangled barbed-wire. "All right," he said. "Now, what was that about a package?"

"You have a document package in our receiving chute, Man Forrester. Envelope. Approximately nine centimeters by 25 centimeters, less than one-half centimeter in thickness, weighing approximately eleven grams. Inscription: 'Mr. Charles Dalgleish Forrester, Social Security Number 145-10-3088, last address while living 252 Dulcimer Drive, Evanston, Illinois. Died of burns received 16 October 1969. To be delivered upon revival.' Contents unknown."

"Hum. Is that all it says?"

"No, Man Forrester. There are machinescript handling instructions on the document. I will phonemize them as close as possible: 'Sigma triphase ooty-poot trip toe, baker tare sugar aleph, paraphase—' "

"Yeah, well, that's enough of that. I mean, is there anything in

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English? Anything I could understand?"

"No, Man Forrester. Faint carbonization marks are visible where the envelope has been creased. There are several minor discolorations which may represent latent human skinprints. At some time a mild corrosive liquid was spilled—"

"Say, joymaker," said Forrester, "I've got an idea. Why don't I open it up? Where'd you say it was?"

Retrieved from his receiving chute, the envelope turned out to be a letter from his wife.

He stared at it and felt something tingling in the corners of his eyes. The handwriting was very strange to him. The signature was *Still with affection, Dorothy* . . . but the hand that had formed those letters scrawled and shook, and had even abandoned her little finishing-school affectations of penmanship, the open-circle dots over the *i*'s, the flowing crosses on the *t*'s. He could read it only with difficulty.

Dear Charles,

This is, I think, the tenth or eleventh time I have written this letter to you. I seem to do it every time there is a death or bad news, as though the only gossip I have that is worth the effort to pass on for what may be another century, — or more — is that which has to do with troubles. Not your troubles, of course. Not any more. Usually the troubles are mine.

Although I must say that really my life has not been a burden to me. I remember that you made me happy, Charles. I must tell you that I missed you terribly. But I must also tell you that I got over it.

To begin with: You will want to know what you died of, I know, and perhaps the people who bring you back to life will not be able to tell you. (I am assuming that you will be brought back to life. I didn't believe it at the time — but since then I've seen it happen.)

You were burned to death in a house fire on Christie Street on October 16th, 1969. Dr. Ten Eyck, who was with the first aid squad, pronounced you dead and, with some difficulty, persuaded them to use their death-reversal equipment to freeze you. There was some trouble about lacking glycerol for perfusion, but the whole fire company, you will be glad to know, dug into their liquor closets and came up with several bottles of bourbon . . . and it was that which was used as a buffer. (If you woke up with a hangover, you now know why!)

There was some question as to whether too much time had elapsed, too. They thought you might have spoiled during the discussion, you see. But as it

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was cold weather for October they decided to take a chance, and you were ultimately consigned to a freeze-dormer at liquid helium temperatures. Where, as I write this, you now lie . . . and where, or in one like it, I expect to be myself before long.

I should tell you that I didn't pay for any of this. Your fire company insurance, it turned out, was adequate to cover all the costs and was in fact earmarked for that purpose. If it had been up to me I don't think I would have gone to the expense, Charles, because after all there were the children to raise.

What can I tell you about them? They missed you very much.

Vance, in particular, played truant from school for the best part of a month, forging notes to his teacher, persuading some adult — I suspected our cleaning woman at the time — to phone the principal to explain his absence, before I found out about it. But then he joined a Boy Scout troop and, as they say, developed other interests.

David didn't say much. But I don't think he ever got over it. At least not during his lifetime. He joined the Peace Corps four years later and was executed by insurgents during the Huk uprising in 1974. Since his body was mutilated before being found he could not be frozen. So he, at least, we will never see again.

Vance is now married, and is in fact a grandfather. It was his second marriage; the first was annulled. His present wife was a schoolteacher before their marriage . . . and they have been happy. And I really can think of nothing else to tell you about your son Vance that does not involve attempting to explain what broke up his first marriage and why his second wife could not stay in the United States. I suppose you may meet him some day. You can ask him yourself.

Billy, you will be astonished to learn, is now a Great Man.

Let me see. He was two when you died. Now he's our senator from Hawaii, and they say he will be president one day. But you will find out more about him in the history books than I can tell you, I think. Let me only say, what I know will interest you, that his first campaign was on a platform of free freezing for everyone, paid for out of Social Security funds, and you were mentioned in every speech. He won easily.

And I . . . am seventy-nine years old.

Since you died forty years ago I cannot now remember you well enough, my Charles, to know if you will mind what I have to say next. Three years after your death I remarried. My husband — my *other* husband — was a doctor. Still is, though he is out of practice now. We have been very happy.

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too. We had two other children. Both girls. You never met him, but he is a good man, barring the fact that at one time he drank too much. He gave it up. He looks a little like you . . .

If I remember correctly, he does.

And I am now in brittle health and this is the last time I will write you this letter. Perhaps we will meet again. I wonder what it will be like.

Still with affection,
Dorothy

Forrester put down the letter and cried: "Joymaker! Was there ever a president named Forrester?"

"President of what, Man Forrester?"

"President of the United States!"

"Which United States is that, Man Forrester?"

"Oh, for God's sakes! The United States of America. Wait a minute. First off, do you know the presidents of the United States of America?"

"Yes, Man Forrester. Washington, George. Adams, John. Jefferson, Thomas—"

"Later on! starting with the middle of the 20th century:"

"Yes, Man Forrester. Truman, Harry S. Eisenhower, Dwight D. Kennedy—"

"Move it up! Start with around 1990."

"Yes, Man Forrester. Williams, Harrison E. Kaapp, Leonard. Stanchion, Karen P. Forrester, Wilton N. Tschirky, Leon—"

"Well, my God," said Forrester softly, and sat marveling while the joymaker droned on to the end of the twenty-first century, and stopped.

Little two-year-old Willy. Baby Bill. A senator . . . and president. It was an unsettling idea.

The joymaker said, "Man Forrester! Notice of physical visit. Adne Bensen is to see you, purpose unstated, time of arrival less than one minute."

"Oh," said Forrester, "good. Let her right in." And he rehearsed what he would tell her, but not to any effect. Geneaology was not in her mind. She was angry.

"You," she cried, "what the sweat do you think you're doing to my kids?"

"Why, nothing. I don't know what you're talking about."

"Dog sweat!" The door crashed closed behind her. "Twitching kamikaze!" She flung her cape against the wall; it dropped to a chair and arranged itself in neat squares. "Pervert creep, you get a kick out of this, don't you? Want to make my kids like you! Want to change

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them into chatter-toothed hand-working dogsweaty *cowardly*—"

Forrester guided her to a chair. "Honey," he said, attempting to get her a drink, "shut up a minute."

"Oh, sweet! Give me that—" She quickly produced drinks for them, without a pause in her talking. "My kids! You want to *ruin* them!"

"Look, I'm sorry, but I didn't mean to get them in a dangerous—"

"Dangerous! Go crawl! I'm not talking about *danger*."

"I didn't let them get hurt—"

"Sweat!"

"Well, it isn't my fault if some crazy Martian—"

"*Dog* sweat!" She was wearing a skintight coverall which seemed to be made of parallel strands of fabric running top to bottom, held together God knew how; with every movement, as she turned, as her breast rose and fell, tiny slivers of skin showed disturbingly. "You're not even a man. What do you know about—"

"I *said* I was sorry. Listen, I don't know what I did wrong, but I'll make it up to them."

She sneered.

"No, I will! I know. There must be something they want. I've got plenty of money, so—"

"Charles, you're pathetic! You haven't got money enough to feed a sick pup—or character enough to make him a dog. Go rot!"

"Now, wait a minute! We're not married. You can't talk to me like that!" He got up and stood over her, the glass unheeded in his hand. Now he was getting angry, too. He opened his mouth to speak, gesticulating.

Six ounces of icy, sticky fluid slopped into her face.

She stared up at him, and began to laugh.

"Oh, Charles!" She put down her own glass and tried to wipe her face. "You know you're an idiot, don't you?" But the way she said it was almost affectionate.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Times, let's see, times three, anyway. For spilling the drink on you, for getting the kids in trouble, for yelling back at you—"

She stood up and kissed him swiftly. As she reached up to him the strands of fabric parted provocatively. She disappeared into the protean cubicle of the lavatory.

Forrester picked up the rest of his drink, drank it, drank hers and carefully ordered two more from the dispenser. His brows furrowed with thought.

When she came back he said, "Honey, one thing. What did you mean when you said I didn't have a lot of money?"

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She fluffed her hair, looking abstracted.

He said persistently, "No, I mean it. I mean, I thought you knew Hara pretty well. He must have told you about me."

"Oh, yes. Of course."

"Well, then. I had this insurance thing when I died, see. They banked the money or something, and it's had six hundred years to grow. Like John Jones's Dollar, if you know what that was. I didn't have much to begin with, but by the time they took me out of the cooler it was over a quarter of a million dollars."

She picked up her new drink, hesitated, then took a drink of it. She said, "As a matter of fact, Charles dear, it was a lot more than that. Two million seven hundred thousand, Hara said. Didn't you ever look at your statement?"

Forrester stared. Two million sev— Two mill—

"Oh, yes." She nodded. "Look it up. You had the papers with you in the tea room yesterday."

"But—but Adne! Somebody must've—I mean, your kids were with me when I deposited the check! It was only two hundred and some thousand . . ."

"Dear Charles. Will you please look it up in your statement?" She stood up, looking somewhat annoyed and somewhat, he thought, embarrassed. "Oh, where the devil did you put it? It was a silly joke anyway and I'm tired of it."

Numbly he stood up with her, numbly found the folder from the West Side Discharge Center and placed it in her hands. What joke? If there was a joke, he didn't know what it was.

She fished out the sheaf of glossy sheets in the financial report, glanced at them, began handing them to him. The first was headed *Cryotherapy, Maintenance, Schedule I.* It bore a list of charges under headings like Annual Rental, Biotesting, Cell Retrieval and Detoxification, as well as a dozen or more recurring items with names that meant nothing to him—Schlick-Tolhaus Procedures, Homiletics and so on. The second sheet bore a list of charges for what appeared to be financial servicing, presumably investing and supervising his capital. The third was for diagnostic procedures, there were several for what seemed to be separate surgeries, sheets for nursing car and for pharmaceuticals used . . . there were in all nearly thirty sheets and the totals at the bottom of each of them were impressive, but the last sheet of all took Forrester's breath away.

It was a simple arithmetical statement:

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Aggregate of converted assets	$2,706,884.72
Aggregate of Schedules 1-27:	$2,443,182.09
Net due patient on discharge:	$263,702.63

Forrester gasped and coughed and cried, half strangled: "Two and a half million dollars for medical——Sweet Jesus God!" He swallowed and looked up unbelievingly. "Holy A.M.A.! Who can afford that kind of money?"

Adne said, "Why, you can, for one. Otherwise you'd still be frozen."

"Christ! And—" a thought struck him—"look at this! Even so they're cheating me! It says two hundred and sixty thousand, and they only gave me two thirty!"

Adne was beginning to look faintly angry again. "Well, after all, Charles. You did go back there for extra treatment. You might get some of that back from Heinzie, I don't know. Of course, he's protesting it because you messed things up."

He looked at her blankly, then back at the statement. He groaned.

"Reach me my drink," he said, and took a long pull of it. He announced, "The whole thing's crazy. Millions of dollars for doctors! People just can't *have* that much money."

"You did," she pointed out. "Given time, people can. At compound interest, they can."

"But it's—it's—it's medical profiteering! I don't know what they did to me, but surely there should be *some* attempt to control fees!"

Adne took his arm and sat him down again on the couch beside her. She said with patience, but not very much patience, "Dear Charles, I wish you would learn a little something about the world before you tell us all what's wrong with it. Do you know what they did to you?"

He admitted, "Well—Not exactly, no. But I know something about what medical treatment costs." He frowned. "Or used to, anyway. I suppose there's inflation."

"I don't think so. I—I think that's the wrong word," she said. "I mean, that means things cost more because the money is worth less, right? But that isn't what happened. Those operations would have cost just as much in the nineteenth century, but—"

"Twentieth!"

"Oh, what's the difference? Twentieth, then. That is, they would have cost just as much if anybody had been able to do them. Of course, nobody was."

Forrester nodded unwillingly. "All right, I admit I'm alive and I shouldn't kick. But still—"

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Impatiently the girl selected another document from the sheaf, glanced at it and handed it to him. Forrester looked, and was very nearly sick. Full color, nearly life size, he thought at first that it was Lon Chaney made up as The Phantom of the Opera.

But there was no makeup. It was a face. Or what was left of one.

He gagged. "What—What—"

"Do you see, Charles? You were in bad shape."

"*Me*?"

"Oh, yes, dear. You really must read your report. See here. Evidently you fell forward into the flames. Besides being killed the whole anterior section of the head was destroyed, At least, the soft parts. Mm—lucky your brains weren't cooked, at that." He saw with incredulity that this tender, charming girl was studying the photograph with as little passion as though the charred meat it represented were a lamb chop. She went on, "Didn't you say you noticed your eyes were different? New eyes."

Forrester croaked, "Put that thing away."

He took a swallow of his drink, regretted it, fished out what remained of his second pack of cigarettes and lit one. "I see what you mean," he said at last.

"Do you? Good, dear. You know, I bet four or five hundred people worked on you. All sorts of specialists. All their helpers. Using all their equipment. They get a case like yours, it's like one of those great big enormous jigsaw puzzles. They have to put it all back together, piece by piece . . . only they don't have all the pieces, so they have to get or make new ones . . . and of course the stuff spoils so. They have to—"

"Quit it!"

"You're awfully jumpy, Charles."

"All right! I'm jumpy." He took a deep drag on the cigarette and asked the question that had been developing in his mind for ten minutes now. "Look. At a normal rate of expenditure—oh, you know; the way you see me living—roughly how long is my quarter of a million dollars going to last?"

She looked into space and tapped her teeth. "There are those custom items of yours," she said thoughtfully. "They come high. Those things you smoke, and fowl eggs, and—what was that other thing? The oransh juice—"

"Leaving out that kind of stuff! How long?"

She pursed her lips. "Well, it depends."

"Roughly! How long?"

She said, "Well, maybe the rest of this week."

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He goggled at her. He repressed a laugh that sounded like a sob.

The end of the *week?*

He had been building himself up to an answer he wouldn't like . . . but this exceeded his expectations. He said wretchedly, "Adne—what am I supposed to do?"

"Well," she said, "you could always get a job."

"Sure," he said bitterly. "Got one up your sleeve? One that pays a million dollars a week?"

To his surprise she took him half seriously. "Oh, Charles! Not that much. I mean, you're not skilled. Twenty, twenty-five thousand a day—I don't think you can really expect more than that."

He said, "You mean you can find me a job like *that*?"

"Well, what do you think Taiko would have paid?"

"Wait a minute! You mean Taiko would have given me a *job*? But I thought—I mean, he said it was his club—what did he call it, the Ned Lud Society—"

"Yes, that's right." She nodded. "But he was quite astonished at the way you acted, Charles. I don't know whether he's angry or not."

"Man Forrester!"

The sound of the joymaker was almost like an alarm, wakening him from sleep. It took him a minute to realize what it was, emerging from his bemused state. Then he said, "In a minute, machine. Adne, let me get this straight—"

But she was looking urgent and abashed. "Charles dear, you'd better take this message."

"Man Forrester! I have a priority notice of personal visit!"

"Yeah, but, Adne—"

"Charles," she said, "please take it. Or never mind. I'll tell you myself." She looked down at her hands, avoiding his eyes. "I guess I should have told you before. I think that's Heinzie coming now."

"Heinzie? The *Martian*? The one—"

She said apologetically, "I told him to come, Charles dear. You'd really better let him in."

VII

As Forrester admitted the man named Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major he was in the state described as "ready for anything". What this actually means is that he was totally unready. He did not know what to expect. He could feel his heart pounding; he felt that his hands were beginning to shake. Even Adne seemed stimulated; she was watching them, her small face intensely interested, and she was

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fumbling something out of her joymaker. A tranquilizer? No; more likely something to pep her up, thought Forrester. Whatever it was, she popped it in her mouth and swallowed before she said: "Hello, Heinzie. Come on in. I think you and Charles have met."

Forrester gave her a look, then returned to Heinzlichen. He started to put out his hand, then stopped, standing on the balls of his feet, half ready to shake hands, half in something like the attack position of karate. "We've met, all right. Too damned often."

Heinzlichen came in, allowed the door to close behind him, and stood still, studying Forrester like a specimen in a museum. Adne had been playing with the lights again, and mottled reds and yellows flecked his face. They fit his personal color scheme. He was a tall, fat man. His hair was red, and he wore a close-cut red beard that covered all of his face except for nose, lips and eyes, like the mask of a chimpanzee. He rubbed his beard thoughtfully while he examined Forrester's face attentively, glanced appraisingly at his arms and body, stared at the stance of his feet and finally nodded. He returned his gaze to Forrester's chest and stabbed at it with a finger. He said, "Dat is where I will kill you. Dere. In de heart."

Forrester exhaled sharply through his nose. It tingled. He felt the adrenalin flushing through his blood. He opened his mouth; but Adne cut in swiftly before he could speak:

"Heinzie, dear! You promised."

"Promised? What promised? I promised to talk, dat's all. So let's talk."

"But Charles doesn't understand how things are, Heinzie, Sit down. Have a drink."

"Oh, sure I'll have a drink. You pick me out something nice. But make it fast, because I only have a couple of minutes." He returned to Forrester. "Well? You want to talk?"

Forrester said belligerently, "You're damned right I want to talk. And no, Adne, I don't want a drink. Now, look here, you—" he hesitated, finding it hard to think of the right thing to say—"well, what I want to know is, why the devil do you want to kill me?"

The Martian looked baffled. He glanced at Adne helplessly, then returned to Forrester. "Sweat, I don't know," he said. "Up dere at de party you stomped my foot and all . . . but I guess I just don't like you anyway. What do you want to ask a question like dat for?"

"Why? It's my life!"

The Martian growled, "I knew

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dis was a bad idea. Honey, I'm going. De more I see of dis guy, de less I like him."

But Adne had her hand on his arm. "Please, Heinzie. Here." She handed him a fizzy orange drink in a thing like a brandy inhaler with a hollow stem. "You know Charles is just out of the sleep-freeze. He's kind of a slow learner, I'm afraid."

"Dat's his business. Killing him, dat's my business." But the Martian grumpily accepted the drink. The girl pressed her advantage.

"Yes, but, Heinzie, dear, what's the fun of it if he doesn't know what it's all about?"

"Trimmer," Heinzlichen growled. "Maybe it's more fun dat way. I can't help dinking we lose some of de important values when it's all so cut and dried."

"All right, Heinzie, maybe you're right, but there's such a thing as fair play, too. Why, I don't even think Charles really knows what his rights are."

The Martian shook his head. "Dat's not my business eider. Dere's his joymaker: let him call up and find out."

Adne winked reassuringly at Forrester, who was not in the least reassured. But she seemed more confident and relaxed now. She leaned back, sipping her drink, and said silkily. "Wouldn't it be nicer for you to talk to him about it? Tell Charles what you want to do exactly?"

"Oh, dat part's all right." The Martian put down his own drink, scratched his beard thoughtfully and said: "Well, it's like dis. I want to beat him up good, and den I will stomp on his chest cage until it breaks and ruptures de heart. De reason I like to do it dat way is it hurts a lot, and you don't get near de brain. Of course," he mused, "I got to pay a little more, but de best pleasures are de ones you pay for. Cheap's cheap." Then his expression lightened—or seemed to; the beard hid most of his transient looks. "Anyway," he added, "maybe I can get off paying de bill. I talked to de lawyer and he said Forrester got himself in a jam wid de law when dis oder fellow butted in, so maybe we can fight de costs. But dat doesn't matter in de long run. What de hell, if it costs it costs."

Forrester nodded thoughtfully and sat down. "I believe I'll have that drink now, Adne," he said. He realized, with a certain amount of pride, that he was perfectly calm.

The reason was that Forrester had come to a decision while Heinzlichen was talking: he had decided to go along with the gag. True, it wasn't really a gag. True, when this man said he in-

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tended to cause Forrester a lot of pain and ultimate death, he meant every word of it. But you could not spend your life in weighing consequences. You had to pretend that the chips were only plastic and did not represent real currency of any sort, otherwise you would lose the game out of nerves and panic.

The very fact that the stakes were so important to Forrester was a good reason for pretending they were only make-believe.

He accepted a glass from Adne and said reasonably, "Now, let's get this straight. Did I understand you right? You talked to a lawyer before you tried to kill me?"

"Nah! Wake up, will you? All I did den was file de papers."

"But you just said—"

"Listen, why don't you? De *papers* was so I could kill you—all de usual stuff, bonds to cover de DR business, guaranties against damaging de brain and like dat. Den de *lawyer* was just yesterday, when I got de idea maybe I could kill you and save all de bond and guarantie money."

"Excuse me. I didn't understand that part." Forrester nodded pleasantly, tipped back his glass and swallowed it down. "Another please, Adne," he said, thinking hard.

It began to make a certain amount of sense, he realized. The thing you had to remember was that to these people death was not a terminal act but only an intermission.

He said, "As I understand it—I mean, if I understand it—the legal part of this business means you have to guarantee to pay my freezer costs if you kill me."

"Nah! Not 'if'. Odderwise you got it."

"So I don't have anything to say about it. The lawyer lets you kill me and I'm stuck with it."

"Dat's right."

Forrester said thoughtfully, "But it doesn't sound fair to me, everything considered."

"Fair? Of course it's fair! Dat's de whole idea of de guaranties."

"Yes, of course—if the circumstances are normal. But in this case, with death-reversal out of the question . . ."

The Martian snorted angrily. "Are you crazy?"

"No, really," Forrester persisted. "You said you were going to try to get out of paying my expenses. You know more about it than I do. Suppose you succeed?"

"Oh, boy! Den you have to pay dem yourself."

Forrester said politely, "But you see, I don't have any money to pay them with. Ask Adne."

The Martian turned to Adne with a look of unbelieving anger,

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but she said, "As a matter of fact, Heinzie, Charles is telling you the truth. I didn't think of it, but it's so. I mean, I haven't checked his balance . . . but it can't be much."

"De hell with his balance! What de sweat do I care about that I just want to kill him!"

"You see, Jura, if you kill me—"

"Shut up, you!"

"But the way things are—"

"Dogsweat!" The Martian's face was working angrily under the mask of beard. He was confused, and mad about it. "What's de matter with you, Forrester? Why didn't you get a job?"

"Well, I will. As soon as I can."

"Sweat! You want to chicken out, dat's all!"

"I simply didn't understand my money situation. I didn't *plan* it this way. I'm sorry, Jura, I really am, but—"

"Shut up!' barked the Martian. "Look, I got no more time for dis talk. I have to go to de rehearsal hall, we're doing de Schumann *lieder* and I'm de soloist. Answer de question. Do you want to chicken out?"

"Well," said Forrester, fiddling with his glass and casting a sidelong glance at Adne, "yes."

"Fink! Dogsweat fink!"

"I know how you feel. I guess I'd feel the same way."

"De hell with how you'd feel. All right, look. I'm not promising anything, but I'll talk to de lawyer again and see where de hell we stand. Meanwhile, you get a job, hear?"

Forrester showed the Martian out. He was feeling elated.

He stood thoughtfully at the door, testing the feeling. For a man who had just discovered he was a pauper, who had reinforced the dislike of an enemy who proposed to kill him, Forrester was feeling pretty good. Probably it was all in an illusion, he thought fatalistically.

Adne was curled up on the couch, studying him. She had been doing something with the lights again; now they were misty blue, and her skin gleamed through the lacy strands of her coverall. Perhaps she had been doing something with that, too; it seemed to be showing more of Adne than it had earlier. Forrester excused himself and went into the little lavatory room to splash cold water on his face. And then he realized the cause of his elation.

He had managed to win a point.

He was not a bit sure it was a worthwhile point; he wasn't even quite sure of what he had won. But for better or for worse, he had won a small victory over

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Heinzlichen Jura de Syrtis Major. For days Forrester had been a cork bobbing to the thrusts of every passerby; now he was thrusting back. He came smiling back into the room and cried: "I want a drink!"

Adne was still on the couch, murmuring into her joymaker. "—and be sure you're locked up," she was saying, "don't forget your prophylaxis and good night, Mim." She put it down and looked up at him. Her expression was sulky but entertained.

"The kids?" She nodded. "My God, is it that late?" He had forgotten the passage of time. "I'm sorry. I mean, what about their dinners and all?"

She looked slightly less sulky, slightly more entertained. "Oh, Charles! You weren't thinking I had to boil oatmeal or peel potatoes? They've had their dinners, of course."

"Oh. Well. I guess we should be thinking about ours—"

"Not yet."

Forrester said, reorienting his thinking very quickly. "All right. Then what about that drink?"

"I'm not thirsty, you fool." She lifted her joymaker, looked him over with narrowed eyes, kissed the soft spot at the base of his throat and touched it with the joymaker.

Forrester felt a sudden urge inside him. It was like a mild electric shock, like a whiff of mingled oxygen and musk.

Adne studied him critically, then leaned forward and kissed him on the lips.

A moment later he said, "Do that again."

She did. Then she lay back against him with her head on his shoulder.

"Dear Charles," she said, "you're such a nut."

He stroked her and kissed her hair. The parallel-strand fabric did not feel coarse or wirey; he could hardly tell it was there.

"I don't know if you did the right thing with Heinzie," she said meditatively. "It's kind of —you know. Almost chicken . . ." Then she turned inside his arm and kissed his ear. "I know it embarrasses you when I talk biology, but—well, the reason I'm natural-flow, you see, is I'm a natural type of girl. Do you understand?"

"Sure," he lied, hardly even hearing her.

"I mean, if you want to you can take the pills and use chemosimulants and it's just *about* the same. But I don't do that, because if you're going to do that, you might just as well go all the way and use the joy machine."

"I can see that, all right," he said, but she fended him off and added:

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"Still, one doesn't have to be *rigid*. Sometimes you're at a low point, and something special happens and you'd like to be at a high point. Then you can take a pill if you want to, do you see?"

"Oh, yes! Say!" said Forrester, pleasantly excited, "I wonder! How would you feel about taking a pill now?"

She sat up, stretched and put her arms around him. "Don't have to," she said, resting her cheek against his. "I took one when you let Heinzie in."

With two victories in one day, thought Forrester in a mood of pleasant triumph and lassitude, this world could come pretty close to his first hopes for it after all. After the girl had gone he slept for ten good hours, and woke with the conviction that everything would come out right. The father of a president and the lover of Adne Bensen was, at least in his own eyes, a figure of much *mana*. There were problems. But he would cope with them.

He ordered breakfast and added: "Machine! How do I go about getting a job?"

"If you will state parameters, Man Forrester, I will inform you as to openings which may be suitable."

"You mean what kind of job? I don't know what kind. Just so it pays—" he coughed before he could get the figure out—"around ten million bucks a year."

But the joymaker took it in stride. "Yes, Man Forrester. Please inform me further as to working conditions—home or external; mode of payment—straight cash or fringed; if fringe, nature permitted—profit-sharing, stock issue, allocated earnings bonus, or other; categories not to be considered; religious, moral or political objections, not stated in your record profile, which may debar classes of employ—'

"Slow down a minute, machine. Let me think."

"Certainly, Man Forrester. Will you receive your messages now?"

"No. I mean," he added cautiously, "not unless there are some life and death ones, like that Martian being out to kill me again." But there weren't. That, too, thought Forrester with pleasure, set this day off from other days.

He ate thoughtfully and economically, bathed, put on clean clothes and allowed himself an extremely expensive cigarette before he tackled the joymaker again. Then he said: "Tell you what you do, machine. Just give me an idea of what jobs are open."

"I cannot sort them unless you

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give me parameters, Man Forrester."

"That's right. Don't sort them. Just give me an idea of what's going."

"Very well, Man Forrester. I will give you direct crude readout of new listings as received in real time. Marking. Mark! Item, curvilinear phase-analysis major, seventy-five hundred. Item, chef, full manual, cordon-bleu experience, eighteen thousand. Item, poll subjects, detergents and stress-control appliance, no experience required, six thousand. Item, child-care domestics—but, Man Forrester," the joymaker broke in on itself, "that clearly specifies female employment. Shall I eliminate the obviously inappropriate listings?"

"No. I mean, yes. Eliminate the whole thing for now. I get the idea." But it was confusing, thought Forrester uncomfortably; the salaries mentioned were hardly higher than twentieth-century scales. They would not support a pekingese pup in this era of joyful extravagance. "I think I'll go see Adne," he said suddenly, and aloud.

The joymaker chose to reply. "Very well, Man Forrester, but I must inform you as to a Class Gamma alert. Transit outside your own dwelling will be interrupted for drill purposes."

"Oh, God. An air raid?"

"A drill, Man Forrester."

"Sure. Well, how long is that going to go on?"

"Perhaps five minutes, Man Forrester."

"Oh, well, that's not so bad. I tell you what, why don't you give me my messages while I'm waiting."

"Yes, Man Forrester. There is one personal and nine commercial. The personal message is from Adne Bensen and follows." Forrester felt the light touch of Adne's hand, then the whisper of Adne's voice: "Dear Charles," her voice whispered, "see me again soon, you dragon! And you know we have to think about something, don't you? We have to decide on a name."

VIII

When he reached Adne's apartment the children let him in. "Hello, Tunt," he said. "Hello, Mim."

They stared at him curiously, then at each other. Blew it again, he thought in resignation; it must be the girl that's Tunt, the boy that's Mim. But he had long since decided that if he tried to track down all his little errors he would have time for nothing else, and he was determined not to be derailed. "Where's your mother?" he asked.

"Out."

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"Do you know where?" Forrester asked.

"Uh-huh."

Forrester said patiently, "Would you like to tell me?"

The boy and girl looked at each other thoughtfully. Then the boy said. "Well, not particularly, Charles. We're kind of busy."

Forrester had always thought of himself as a man who liked children but, although he smiled at these two, the smile was becoming forced. "I guess I can call her up on the joymaker," he said.

The boy looked scandalized. "*Now*? While she's *crawling*?"

Forrester sighed. "Look, fellows, I want to talk to your mother about something. How do you recommend I go about it?"

"You could wait here, I guess," the boy said reluctantly.

"If you *have* to," added the girl.

"I get the impression you don't want me around. What are you kids doing?"

"Well —" the boy overruled his sister with a look and said sheepishly — "we're having a meeting."

"But please don't tell Taiko!" cried the girl.

"He doesn't like our club," the boy finished.

"Just the two of you?"

"Sweet sweat, no!" laughed the boy. "Let's see. There are eleven of us."

"Twelve!" the girl crowed. "I bet you forgot the robot again."

"Maybe I did. You and me, Tunt. Four boys. Three girls. A grown-up. A Martian . . . and the robot. Yeah, twelve."

"You mean a Martian like *Heinzlichen what's-his-name*?"

"Oh, no, Charles! Heinzie's a dope, but he's people. This is one of the big green ones with four arms."

Forrester did a double-take, then said, "You mean like in Edgar Rice Burroughs? But — but I didn't think those were real—"

The boy looked politely interested. "Yes? What about it?"

"What do you mean by 'real', Charles?" asked the girl.

In the old days before Forrester died he had been a science-lover. It had always seemed to him wonderful and exciting that he should be living in an age where electricity came from wall sockets and living pictures from a box on a bench. He had thought sometimes, with irony and pity, of how laughably incompetent some great mind of the past, a Newton or Archimedes, would have been to follow his own six-year-old's instructions about tuning a television set or operating his electric trains. So here I am, he thought wryly, the

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bushman in Times Square. It's not much fun.

But by careful and single-minded questioning he got some glimpse of what the children were talking about. Their playmates were not "real", but they were a lot realer than, say, a Betsy-Wetsy doll. They were analogues — simulacra — the children called them "simulogs", when pressed. The little girl said proudly that they were very good at developing inter-personal relationships. "Got that much," said Charles, "or anyway I think I do. So what does Taiko have to do with it?"

"Oh, *him*!"

"He doesn't like anything that's *fun*."

"Says we're losing the will to cope with — with what you said, Charles. 'Reality.' "

"And all that sweat," added the girl. "Say! Would you like to hear him?"

She glanced toward the viewwell, now showing a placid background scene of woody glades and small furry animals. "You mean on the television?" Forrester asked.

"The what, Charles?"

"On that."

"That's right, Charles."

"Well," said Forrester . . .

And thought that, after all, he might as well. If worst came to worst, he could take up Taiko's offer of a job, assuming it was still open; and before he came to that worst he would be better off to known something about it. "Display away," he said. "What have I got to lose?"

The viewing wall, obedient to the little girl's orders, washed out the forest glade and replaced it with a stage. On it a man in a fright wig was bounding about and howling.

With difficulty Forrester recognized the blond, crew-cut visitor he had so unceremoniously got rid of — when? Was it only a couple of days ago? Taiko was doing a sort of ceremonial step dance, a couple of paces in one direction and a stomp; a couple of paces away, and another stomp. And what he was shouting seemed like gibberish to Forrester:

"Lud, lords, led nobly!" (Stomp!) "Let Lud lead, lords (stomp!), lest lone, lorn lads lapse loosely (stomp!) into limbo!" (Stomp!) He faced forward and threw his arms wide. The camera zoomed in on his impassioned, tortured face. "Jeez, kids! You want to get your goddam brains scrambled? You want to be a juiceless jellyfish If you don't, then — let Lud lead! (Stomp!) Let Lud lead! (Stomp!) Let Lud lead —"

The boy cried over the noise

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from the view wall: "Now he's going to ask for comments from the viewers. This is where we usually send in things to make him mad like. 'Go back in the freezer, you old icy cube' and 'Taiko's a dirty old Utopian!' Of course, we don't give our names."

"Today I was going to send in, 'If it was up to people like you we'd still be swinging from our tails like apes,'" said the girl thoughtfully, "but it probably wouldn't make him very mad."

Forrester coughed. "Actually, I'd just as soon not make him mad. I may have to go to work for him."

The children stared at him, dismayed. The boy extinguished Taiko's image on the view-wall and cried, "Please, Charles, don't do that! Mim said you turned him down."

"I did, but I may have to reconsider; I have to get some kind of a job. Matter of fact, that's why I'm here."

"Oh, good," said the girl. "Mim'll get you a job. Won't she, Tunt?"

"If she can," the boy said uncertainly. "What can you do?"

"That's one of my problems. But there has to be something; I'm running out of money."

They did not respond to that, merely looked at him wide-eyed. They not only looked astonished, they looked embarrassed.

At length the little girl sighed and said, "Charles, you're so sweaty ignorant I could freeze. I never heard of anybody being out of money, 'cept the Forgotten Men. Don't you know how to get a job?"

"Not very well."

"You use the joymaker," the boy said patiently.

"Sure. I tried that."

The boy looked excited. "You mean — look, Charles, you want me to help you? Cause I will. I mean, we had that last year in Phase Five. All you have to do is —"

His expression suddenly became crafty. "Oh, sweat, Charles," he said carelessly, "let me do it for you. Just, uh, tell it to listen to me."

Forrester didn't need the girl's look of thrilled shock to warn him. "Nope," he said firmly. "I'll wait for your mother to come home."

The boy grinned and surrendered. "All right. Charles. I just wanted to ask it something about Mim's other, uh, friends. Well, here's what you do. Tell it you want to be tested for an employability profile and then you want recommendations."

"I don't exactly know what that involves," Forrester said cautiously.

The boy sighed. "You don't have to, Charles. Just do it. What

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the sweat do you think the joymaker's *for?*"

And actually, it turned out pretty easy, although the "employability profile" testing involved some rather weird questions—

What is 'God'?

Are your stools black and tarry?

If you happened to be a girl, would you wish you were a boy?

Assume there are Plutonians. Assume there are elves. If elves attacked Pluto without warning, whose side would you be on?

Why are you better than anyone else?

Most of the questions were like that. Some were worse—either totally incomprehensible to Forrester, or touching on matters that made him blush and glance uneasily at the children. But the children seemed to take it as a matter of course, and indeed grew bored before long and wandered back to their own viewwall, where they watched what seemed to be a news broadcast. Forrester growled out the answers as best he could, having come to the conclusion that the machine knew what it was doing even if he didn't. The answers, of course, made no more sense than the questions; tardily he realized that the joymaker was undoubtedly monitoring his nervous system and learning more from the impulses that raced through his brain than from his words, anyway. Which was confirmed when, at the end of the questions, the joymaker said: "Man Forrester, we will now observe you until you return to rest state. I will then inform you as to employability."

Forrester stood up, stretched and looked around the room. He could not help feeling that he had been through an ordeal. Being reborn was nearly as much trouble as being born in the first place.

The children were discussing the scene on the view-wall, which seemed to show a crashed airliner surrounded by emergency equipment, on what appeared to be a mountain-top somewhere. Men and machines were dousing it with chemical sprays and carrying out injured and dead—if they made that distinction—on litters, to what Forrester recognized by the ruby caduceus as death-reversal vehicles. The mountainside was dotted with what looked like pleasure craft—tiny, bright-colored aircraft that had no visible business there, and that seemed to be occupied by sightseers. No doubt they were, thought Forrester—remembering the crowds that had stood by the night he was burned to death, heedless of icy spray, icy

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winds and irritated police trying to push them back.

"Old Hap's never going to make it," said the boy to the girl, and looked up to see Forrester. "Oh, you're done?"

Forrester nodded. A drone from the view-wall saying,"—made it again, with a total to this minute of thirty-one and fifty-five, out of a possible ninety-eight. Not bad for the Old Master! Yet Hap still trails the rookie Maori from Pore Moresby—"

"What are you watching?" he asked.

"Just the semi-finals," said the boy. "How'd you make out on your tests?".

"I don't have the results yet." The screen flickered and showed a new picture, a sort of stylized star-map with arrows and dots of green and gold. Forrester said, "Is ten million a year too much to ask for?"

"Sweat, Charles! How would we know?" The boy was clearly more interested in the view-wall than in Forrester, but he was polite enough to add: "Tunt's projected life average is about twelve million a year. Mine's fifteen. But of course we've got uh, more advantages," he said delicately.

Forrester sat down and resigned himself to waiting for the results. The arrows and circles were moving about the star-map, and a voice was saying: "—probe reports from 61 Cygni, Proxima Centauri, Epsilon Indi and Cordoba 31353 show no sign of artifactual activity and no change in net systemic energy levels."

"Dopes!" shrilled the little girl. "They couldn't find a Martian in a mattress."

"—at Groombridge 1830, however, the unidentified object monitored six days ago shows no sign of emission and has been tentatively identified as a large comet, although its anecliptic orbit marks this large and massive intruder as a potential trouble spot. Needless to say, it is being carefully watched, and SEPF headquarters in Federal City announce that they are phasing two additional monitors out of their passive orbits . . ."

"What are they talking about?" Forrester asked the boy.

"The war, of course. Shut up, won't you?"

"—Well, there's good news tonight from 22H Camelopardis! A late bulletin just received from sortie-control headquarters states that the difficult task of replacing the damaged probe has been completed! The first of the replacements rushed out from BO 7899 has achieved stellar orbit in a near-perfect, almost circular orbit, and all systems are go. Seven back-up replacements—"

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"Sweat," said the girl. "What a tedious war! Charles, you used to do things better didn't you?"

"In what way?"

The girl looked puzzled. "More *killing*, of course."

"If you call that better, maybe we did. World War Two killed like twenty million people, I think."

"*Weep.* Twenty *million*," breathed the girl. "And so far we've killed, what is it, Tunt? Twenty-two?"

"Twenty-two million?" asked Forrester.

The boy shook his head disgustedly. "Twenty-two individual Sirians. Isn't that rotten?"

But before Forrester could answer his joymaker spoke up:

"Man Forrester! Your tests have been integrated and assayed. May I display the transcript on Bensen children equipment?"

"Go ahead," the boy said sullenly. "Can't be any worse than *that*."

The star-map disappeared from the wall and was replaced by shimmering sine-waves, punctuated with numbers that were quite meaningless to Forrester. "You may apply for re-evaluation on any element of the profile, if you wish. Do you wish to do this, Man Forrester?"

"Hell, no." The numbers and graphs were not only meaningless but disturbing. Forrester had a flash of memory which he identified as coming from the last time a government agency had concerned itself with finding him a job—after his discharge from the peacetime conscription term, when he joined the long lines of unemployables telling their lies to a bored State Employment Service clerk. He could almost see the squares of linoleum on the floor, the queues of those who, like himself, wanted only to collect unemployment insurance for a while, in the hope that the world would clarify itself to them.

But the joymaker was talking:

"Your profile, Man Forrester, indicates relatively high employability in personal-service and advocative categories. I have selected ninety-three possible openings. Shall I give you the list?"

"My God, no. Just give me the one you like best."

"Your optimum choice, Man Forrester, is as follows: Salary, seventeen thousand five hundred. This is rather less than your stated requirements, but an expense—"

"Hold on a minute! I'll say it's less! I was asking for ten million!"

"Yes, Man Forrester. You stated ten million per year. This

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is seventeen thousand five hundred per day. At four-day week norm, allowing for projected overtime as against health losses, three million eight hundred thousand dollars per year. Expenses are also included, however, optimized at five million plus in addition to salary."

"Wait a minute." The numbers were so large as to be dizzying. He turned to the children. "That's almost nine million a year. Can I live on that?"

"Sweat, Charles, sure, if you want to."

Forrester took a deep breath. "I'll take it," he said.

The joymaker did not seem particularly concerned. "Very well, Man Forrester. Your duties are as follows: Conversation. Briefing. Discussion. The orientation is timeless, so your status as a recent disfreeze will not be a handicap. You will be expected to answer questions and be available for discussions, usually remote due to habitat considerations. Some travel is indicated."

"*Sweat.*" The Bensen children showed signs of interest; the boy sat up and his sister stared wide-eyed at Forrester.

"Supplementary information, Man Forrester: This employer has rejected automated services for heuristic reasons. His desideratum is subjectivity rather than accuracy of data. The employer is relatively unfamiliar with human history, culture and customs —"

"It *is*!" cried the girl.

"—and will supplement your services with TIC data as needed." Forrester cut in. "Never mind that. Where do I go for my interview?"

"Man Forrester, you have had it."

"You mean I've got the job? But—but what do I do next?"

"Man Forrester, I was outlining the procedure. Please note the following signal." There was a mellow, booming chime. "This will indicate a message from your employer. Under the terms of your employment contract you may not decline to accept these messages during the hours of ten hundred to fourteen hundred on working days. You are further required to receive such messages with no more than twelve hours' delay even on non-working days."

And that, thought Forrester, was that.

Except for trying to find out what was bugging the kids. He said, "All right. What's eating you?"

They were whispering together, their eyes on him. The boy stopped long enough to ask, "Eating us, Charles?"

"Why are you acting like that?" Forrester amended.

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"Oh, nothing," the boy said.

"Nothing *important,*" corrected the girl.

"Come on!"

The little girl said, "It's just that we never knew anybody who'd work for *them* before."

"Work for who?"

"The joymaker told you, Charles! Don't you listen?" said the boy, and the girl chimed in:

"Sweat, Charles! Don't you know who you're working for?"

Forrester took a deep breath and glared at them. He told himself that they were only children, and that in fact he was rather fond of them; but they seemed on this particular morning to be determined to drive him mad. He sat down and picked up his joymaker. Carefully he scanned the cluster of buttons until he found the crystal-clear, rounded one he was looking for, turned the joymaker until its spray-nozzle was pointing at the exposed flesh on his arm and pressed the button.

Happily it was the right button. What the fine mist that danced into his wrist might be he did not know, but it achieved the expected effect. It was like a super-tranquilizer; it cleared his mind, quieted his pulse and enabled him to say, quite calmly, "Machine! Just who the hell have you got me working for?"

"Do you wish me to display a picture of your employer, Man Forrester?"

"You damn bet I wish!"

"Please observe the view-wall, Man Forrester."

And observe it Forrester did; and swallowed hard, stunned.

In all justice to the joymaker, Forrester was forced to admit that he had placed no restrictions on its choice of an employer for him. He had been willing to accept almost anything, but all the same he was surprised.

He hadn't expected his employer to have bright green fur, or a diadem of tiny eyes, peering out of a ruff around a pointed head, or tentacles. He had not, in fact, expected it to be one of The Enemy, the race whose presence in space had scared mankind into a vast series of raid drills, weapons-programs and space probes . . . in short, a Sirian.

TO BE CONTINUED

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INSIDE MAN

by H. L. GOLD

He seemed to be reading minds. But whose? They certainly did not belong to anybody he knew!

Lester Shay was married three months when he got his first Erector set. Thalia, noting that he felt tired and rundown, ordered him to get a checkup. Too tired and rundown to object, he went to see Dr. Peabody.

"Very surprising," the physician said after an embarrassingly thorough examination. "Married three months, beautiful, affectionate bride — but you get plenty of sleep, outdoors a lot, a moderate amount of exercise."

"I do all my own marketing," said Les, who owned a wholesale grocery business. "I walk every chance I get, which is considerable. Marketing is all outdoors, you know. And I have to get to sleep early, because if I don't get up early, my competitors —"

"Exactly. And I know it's not overwork. I'm overworked myself, but I'm in tiptop condition."

"How do you manage it?" asked Les, interested in a tired, rundown way.

"A hobby," said Dr. Peabody.

"Gardening? Raising tropical fish? Golf?"

"The last thing you'd expect," Dr. Peabody said, leaning forward excitedly. "I know a lot of dentists. They give me old fillings and I've got this little smelter, see, and I break down the amalgam into silver and mercury, then sell the stuff back to the dentists. Darn near pays for itself! And *fun?* You ought to come visit my basement sometime!"

Shambling home, Les wondered what he could take up as a

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hobby. Nightclubs and theaters wouldn't do. They let out too late. Besides, they weren't a *hobby*. Raising things was too close to his actual work; it would make him think about produce and canned goods. He did enough outdoor walking to eliminate sports.

That was when he saw the Erector set in the store window.

He stopped and studied it, looking more wistful now than tired or rundown. He had always wanted an Erector set, but his parents, believers in as the twig is bent so grows the tree, had refused to buy him one. They didn't, they explained, want their son to become a mechanic. Not, mind you, they'd added, that there was anything wrong with mechanics. But he was worthy of great things. They had also been disappointed when he went into the wholesale grocery line, were more pleased now because he was doing well in it, but that wasn't important. He still wanted an Erector set.

When he got home, Thalia looked expectantly at the large, heavy box. He had bought the biggest and most expensive set, of course.

"Oh, something for the house?" she asked, obviously hoping it wasn't.

"Doctor said I needed a hobby or something," he explained uncomfortably.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed. "We can do it together!"

"You mean you like working on Erector sets, too?" he cried.

"Oh," she said. "Well, that's really a — well, a man's hobby."

She gave him the room that would some day be a nursery and he built a parachute jump, a stake truck, a windmill and a ski tow. The spring came back to his walk and the roses to his cheeks.

But less than a week later, lying in bed with his bride in his arms, he could sense the old tired, rundown feeling creep up on him.

"What's the matter, darling?" Thalia asked, disconcerted. "Is it the onions I had for dinner?"

"Oh, no, sweetheart!" he tried to answer hastily, only it came out a slow sigh. "It's the Erector set."

"The — Erector set? Oh! The Erector set. Well, if it's broken, darling, you can always buy another."

"It's not broken. That isn't the trouble," he sighed again, and turned over and moodily went to sleep.

The problem was still on his mind in the pre-dawn at the market. Kale was coming in nicely and he had bought all the primes offered by the farmers. He mor-

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osely helped Arnie, his driver, load up.

"What happened to the old zip?" Arnie asked concernedly. "You were feeling great for a while. Down in the dumps again?"

"I guess so," said Les. "Temporarily, at least. I hope."

"You ought to try tooling one of these monmouths through city traffic. Gotta judge every inch of the way. Boy, you drive one and I bet you won't have a minute to —"

Les found himself listening intently, but not to Arnie's good-natured chatter. Something was wrong. He *knew* it was wrong. But what?

No, not like walking barefooted in spilled sugar, he mused. Though it was a little like that — sort of gritty. But painful, too. As if he were trying to run with a sore socket in his leg.

"You've got a bearing burning out," Les interrupted.

Arnie took a fast glance at him. "Since when you know about motors, Boss?"

"A bearing," said Les. "That's what it feels like."

Les nodded at a service station up ahead. "Pull in there. I want to have it checked."

The garageman examined the motor and found a bearing rubbed so raw that Les had to turn away in compassion and disgust. He left Arnie, puzzled enough to be silent for once, at the service station and walked alone the rest of the way to the office.

Les discovered he was surrounded by sensations ranging from purrs of pleasure all the way to groans of pain. One purr came from a trim little Porscht — new tune-up job, a little heavy on the grease, but that would thin out on the straightaway, he thought, and the unexpected thought alarmed him.

Thought? He considered. It was a feeling, a very strong and explicit emotion. So was the sympathy for a passing cab that really wanted to lie down on some nice, restful junkpile. A painful *click, click* bothered him. He looked up. It was a tower clock, desperately clawing its way around the hours on eroded cams. *Damn* the sadists who would put a conscientious servant through such torture, he thought angrily.

But he felt equally guilty when he came into the office and heard Miss Zeichner typing. The dogs in the escape mechanism were practically howling and the keys were moving only because her slim but powerful fingers were beating them into moving.

"Leave that alone!" Les said, more sharply than he'd intended. "I mean, no more typing for to-

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day," he amended when she jumped and looked frightened.

"But the filing's all done and I have a perfect *mess* of correspondence to get out," she objected. "If I don't do it today —"

"Not on that battered hulk," he told her.

He called and ordered a new electric typewriter. Miss Zeichner was, as she put it, thrilled. He shrugged. She always was either thrilled or absolutely — completely and absolutely — shattered. But only over unimportant things.

For instance, was she completely and absolutely shattered by the pained limpings and clenched-teeth determination to do a job, to keep those pistons pumping no matter what the cost; completely and absolutely thrilled by the sleek, contented murmurs, the happy little laughs of conscious strength, easy power, the cared-for feeling; or completely and absolutely dismayed by the breathless puffing under a merciless load, like —

He listened sharply. He *felt* more sharply still.

It came from the warehouse behind the office. He sprang out of his seat savagely enough to upset Miss Zeichner again, raced into the warehouse.

A valiant little fork-lift truck, overloaded by half again too many cases of canned salmon, was almost red-faced with strain.

Les leaped aboard, switched off the motor, hauled out the man, shoved him against the wall and started a murderous swing.

"Mr. Shay!" yelped the man. "What did I do wrong?"

It was Walt's voice. Les blinked, dropped his fist, slumped.

"Sorry, Walt," he mumbled. "Guess I'm all on edge today. You had that fork-lift overloaded and it — it jarred me. Sorry."

Walt picked his shirt button up off the floor. "Hell, Mr. Shay, it's all right. I'd probably feel the same if somebody was ruining my property."

"*Property*!" shouted Les, going for him again. "Things like machines — *property*!"

Arnie, back while his truck was being repaired, caught Les from behind and held and soothed him into the office.

"You're all tensed up, Boss," Arnie said. "I'll get you a cab and you can go home and take a hot bath and relax with your slippers and bathrobe and newspaper. How about it, huh?"

"I suppose so," Les muttered. "I'm not much help today."

The cab was in good shape — that new pinion hurt a little, but it would break in soon — and Les sat back, easing, and even joined the comfortable, unworried motor hum.

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Like all affectionate brides, beautiful or otherwise, when their husbands come home half a day early, Thalia was flattered and coy, then concerned when he abstractedly pecked her only once to her dozens of kisses on the face and mouth and ears and neck, then relieved when he told her he wasn't sick, and finally delighted because now he could help plan the menu for tonight.

"Menu?" he repeated.

"The Fitches are coming for dinner."

"Fitch? Fitch — good God — he has *seventeen* stores — if I get the account — what do you mean, menu? Cavier, bluepoints, vichysoisse, filet mignon, breast of guinea hen —"

"Darling," she said. "Mr. Fitch has an ulcer."

"Ulcer," said Les. "Milk and crackers. Cottage cheese."

"What about that new line of dietetic food you said you could tie up if you only had the outlets?"

"Hey!" he cried. "Why'd I have to go marry you and lose the best office manager I ever had?"

"Because it was one or the other."

He gave her a dirty grin.

"Well, I was tired of being a working girl," she said defensively. "Every real, honest-to-goodness woman wants —"

"I know what every real, honest-to-goodness woman wants. Let's let the menu wait, because every real, honest-to-goodness man wants what every real, honest-to-goodness woman — "

She wriggled out of his arms. "And with me going frantic? I was going to phone you to pick up those dietetic foods and bring them home with you tonight. Now we'll have to get a special messenger."

"Yeah," he said. "It's frustrating, but you're right. Why can't Miss Zeichner —"

"Oh, she'll learn, darling. Just give her time."

"Hah!" he said. "Why, you wouldn't believe it, but — "

"The menu," she told him firmly. "And the messenger."

"Well, look, damn it," Les argued the next morning, waiting for an elevator with Thalia in the Medical Building. "Just because I didn't get the Fitch account is no reason to haul me to a psychiatrist!"

"Lower your voice. People are looking," she shushed. "It isn't that and you know it, darling."

"You mean Mrs. Fitch's watch? Well, there *were* two damaged jewels in it!"

"But to take it off her wrist right in the middle of dinner and go racing out in search of a jeweler at that time of night —"

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"I got one, didn't I? And he saw the cracked one on the top and put up a battle when I hold him about the chipped one underneath, but he took the watch apart and sure enough —"

"Yes, darling. I know. That's not what's important."

The elevator door opened and they got in.

"Then what is?" challenged Les.

She glanced at the elevator operator and whispered, "What you told me after Mr. Fitch said they couldn't wait any longer for you to get back and to send the watch — Les! You're not listening!"

But he was. He was listening very hard.

"The poor thing," he said, shaking his head sadly.

She looked around. Except for the operator, they were alone in the elevator.

"Who?" she asked.

"The elevator. When are people going to learn that too much oil — "

"That's what I mean, darling." She guided him across the corridor and opened the door to a waiting room. Shakily she said. "Now there isn't a thing to worry about."

"Oh, no?" he snapped. "With imbeciles and bunglers tormenting defenseless machines that ask nothing more than to be done by as they do, living by the Golden Rule, which is more than I can say —"

"Mr. Shay?" inquired the nurse-receptionist at the desk. "You may go right in. Dr. Hyde is expecting you."

"Dr. Hyde," snarled Les. "I bet he's got a silent partner named Mr. Jekyll."

He flung open the door and slammed it shut behind him.

With his hands behind his head, Les lay staring up at the ceiling, blinking once a minute. Thalia inchwormed rapidly toward him until her head was under his chin.

"Darling?" she said in a very little voice.

He breathed slightly harder on her hair to show he was paying attention.

"You know, we've only been married three months," she said, "and already we act as if we'd grown old and gray together."

"Uh," he told her.

"Well, *I* don't feel old and gray." She paused. "Do you?"

"Um," he elaborated.

"You just *lie* there," she cried angrily. "Don't you give one single, solitary thought to how — how *undesirable* it makes me feel?"

He forced his throat to move, then his tongue, finally his lips. "You're not."

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"Then what —" She stopped, was silent for a long moment. "I'm a heel," she said against his chest. "You're trying to digest what Dr. Hyde said to you today."

Les sat up abruptly with his back against the headboard, one stiff forefinger stabbing repeatedly at the mattress. "Not digest. Regurgitate."

"It made sense to me, darling."

"What? That I wanted to kill my father for not buying me an Erector set?"

"Well, didn't you?"

"Of course not! And why not my mother, too? She had just as much to do with me not getting it as he did."

"The Oedipal situation."

"And if I say she loused me up more than Dad ever did, you'll agree with Hyde that I'm displacing or something. Oh, no. You're not catching me in that no-exit trap. Besides, Dad bought me a bike right afterward and I had a hell of a lot more fun with it than I'd have gotten out of an Erector set. Mom had plenty to say about the danger of riding a bike in the city, but he trusted my judgment and bought one just the same."

"Infantilizing you, darling," she said gently, "instead of helping you learn to accept inevitable frustrations."

"Who was frustrated?" he shouted. "I *loved* that bike! And not only that, I didn't even think once of an Erector set till Dr. Peabody suggested I take up a hobby!" He waited. "Go ahead, say it — I repressed the whole thing, didn't I?"

"That's what Dr. Hyde said, darling."

"All right, smart guy, see what you make of this. I told him the truth, every bit of it, and he says hallucinations. So I say oh, yeah, what about the water cooler over in the corner and he says what about the water cooler. And I tell him there's a tiny leak in the refrigerating coil and he takes a look, only the crack is too small to see, but in a month or two they'll have to seal it up and put in more refrigerant, you wait and see if they don't."

"And in the meantime?" she asked. "We can't have you go around in this nervous state."

"I know," he said miserably. "The rheostat on the electric mixer is calibrated wrong, the oil burner is feeding too fast, the bulb in the hall is about ready to blow, we got a lemon of a pre-amp in the hi-fi, the turntable is almost a full rpm too slow, and I bet there's going to be a pip of a smashup on the highway — I don't like the way the traffic light feels."

"Feels?"

"Yes," he said flatly. "Feels."

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"Darling?" she started again.

"Um."

"You know you're only personalizing these things the way you did when you were so awfully disappointed about the Erector set."

"Sure, sure."

"It's just a matter of accepting that emotionally."

"I'm working on it."

"And you don't need your mother any more. You have me."

He rolled out of bed. "I never thought of that," he said, and began unbuttoning his pajama top.

"Darling, what have you got in mind?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"Taking a walk to clear my head. You and Hyde have all the explanations. Without the two of you to confuse me, maybe I can find the answers."

Chilled and tired, Les wandered into Mike's All Nite Garage. Mike poked his head out from under a car on the grease pit and asked, "Do something for you, Mr. Shay?"

"No," said Les. "You fix them instead of ruining them."

"That's how I make my living," Mike said cheerfully. "If they didn't ruin 'em, I wouldn't have 'em to fix."

Les, about to retort in sudden rage, sat down on a fender instead and thought about Mike's philosophy. It was as if dentists hired thugs to bash in people's teeth so there would always be work, or veterinarians poisoned animals just enough to need treatment. He decided he didn't like Mike's reasoning. He also decided not to argue about it; he was tired of strange looks and counter-arguments.

Mike climbed out of the pit, wiped his hands on a ball of dirty cotton waste and got into the car to start the motor. He cocked his head like a music critic listening first to one section of the orchestra and then the other.

"Sounds pretty good," he pronounced.

"The generator," said Les.

Mike frowned. "What about the generator?"

"It's undercharging."

"Hell it is!"

"Hell it isn't."

Mike glanced at the needle and winked. "So, okay, more business." Then he scowled at Les. "How'd you know it was undercharging?"

"It's a long story. You have any more jobs tonight, Mike?"

"Nope. Why?"

"You've got a bunch of cars on the lot. I've got ten bucks to either prove or disprove something. Deal?"

"Deal," said Mike, leading the way out to the lot.

By the seventh car, Mike was

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quiet and thoughtful. Les had found only one that murmured tranquilly and when he stated what was wrong with each, and Mike checked, Les had pinpointed the trouble exactly.

"Well, how do you account for that?" Les wanted to know.

Mike did some meditative scratching. "I go by ear myself, Mr. Shay. I can listen to a motor and tell pretty near what's wrong. You just got a better ear than me, that's all."

"And when it isn't the motor? A lot of things in the body and chassis didn't squeak or rattle."

"Yeah," said Mike. "I was thinking about them. I can't figure it out."

"I can," another voice said.

Les leaped. A solemn face with a slight stubble and a greasy homburg was leaning out of a car window.

"Sorry, Prof," said Mike. "I didn't mean to wake you. Prof, Mr. Shay. I let the Prof sleep in the cars, provided he takes his shoes off and keeps his hat on."

"My pleasure, Mr. Shay," announced the Prof.

"H-hello," said Les. "You *did* say you could figure it out?"

"No mystery at all," the Prof said. "Can you do this only with automobiles or all kinds of machinery?"

"All kinds."

"Then the answer is very simple," stated the Prof. "Telepathy."

"*Telepathy!*"

"Of a very highly specialized variety." The Prof looked hopefully at Les. "Is the full explanation worth the price of a drink?"

"I'll say!" exclaimed Les.

Thalia opened red eyes and watched Les pick his way across the uncluttered floor to the closet.

"Well?" she said. "Did you find your answers?"

"Ah — you bet," said Les, carefully dropping his clothes to the floor.

"In a bottle."

"*Over* a bottle. With the most profound — makes your Dr. Hyde sound — listening with the third ear when he should be using all three!"

"Okay, go on," she said resignedly.

"Nothing to it. I'm a specialist."

"A specialist?"

He sat down on the bed to tangle with his shoelaces. "A born mechanic."

"Now look here, Lester Shay! If you think you're going to give up a perfectly good business to go rummaging around in cars—"

"Don't have to," he answered peacefully. "Just gotta harden myself. That's what the Prof says.

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He's not really a professor, only talks that way because he claims it intimidates people."

"A bum!"

"No, sweetheart. A different kind of specialist. Damn shoelaces!" He snapped them and kicked his shoes across the room. "His notion is that evolution always starts with simple, general types and works up to highly specialized ones."

"Like born mechanics!"

He smiled delightedly. "That's it. Or born mathematicians. Or born laborers. Or born artists, salesmen, farmers —"

"Bums."

"Oh, just the very, very, very, good ones," he corrected her owlishly. "The others work at it, but they're not specialists. Way he puts it, the difference is in the degree of success."

"And," she said, "you're a born mechanic."

"Right. Just never got a chance to start. Better this way, though. You see, I know what machines feel because I feel it, too. If I'd been doing that all these years, I'd be nothing but nerves. A lot of people *don't* treat machines right, you know. Feeling how the machines suffer would put me in just as bad shape as they are."

She sat up interestedly. "This Prof of yours sounds bright. Did he tell you how to get rid of your — your —"

"Affliction, darling. It's like when a surgeon goes down the street and he sees people in drastic need of operations and can't do anything about it. Couldn't club them, haul them away to the hospital, operate on them, could he?"

"No, of course not."

"So he has to steel himself. Or take the gardener who feels what flowers feel. And grass. Srubbery. He has to cut the flowers, mow the lawn, clip the hedges. If he felt every slash into every bit of vegetation, weeds included — well, you can imagine."

She thought. "Yes, I think I can. And what about you, darling?"

"Same thing. Steel myself. The Prof says I can't take care of all the machines in the world and he's right. So I gotta shut out the cries and groans and moans of the machinery. You see?"

"I see, but can you do it?" she asked worriedly.

"Diversion does the trick. If I receive, I just make sure I receive something else. The Prof suggested trying people. So I did, down at the tavern."

"How did you make out?"

"Noisy damned place," he said. "And full of alcoholic thoughts. But I concentrated and it blanked out the screeching fan and the pump in the cellar that needs cleaning so badly —"

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"People's thoughts," said Thalia uneasily. "I don't know if I like that. I know *I* wouldn't feel comfortable around you."

He plumped up the pillow, accidentally dropped it on the floor, tired to decide whether to pick it up, realized he would fall on top of it.

"Doesn't work that way at all, sweetheart. It's —" He hunted for an analogy. "It comes out like machinery."

"Like *what*?" she exclaimed.

"Here, maybe I can show you." He stood beside the bed and gazed down searchingly at her.

"Mm-*humm*. Your radiator is boiling over."

"What a crude way to put it!"

He continued standing there, his gaze gone remote and unseeing.

"Well?" Thalia asked irritably. "How's your radiator?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," he replied in a distant voice.

"And?"

"It's percolating a little," he answered.

She threw the covers aside. "Come on, get in," she said. "It's better than nothing."

— H.L. GOLD

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The Machines, Beyond Shylock

Ray Bradbury

The Machines, beyond Shylock
When cut bleed not
When hit bruise not,
When scared shy not,
Lose nothing and so nothing gain;
They are but a dumb show:
Put Idiot in
And the moron Light you'll know.
Stuff right, get right,
Stuff rot, get rot,
For no more power lies here
Than man himself has got.
Man his energy conserves?
Machineries wait.
Man misses the early train?
Then thought itself is late.

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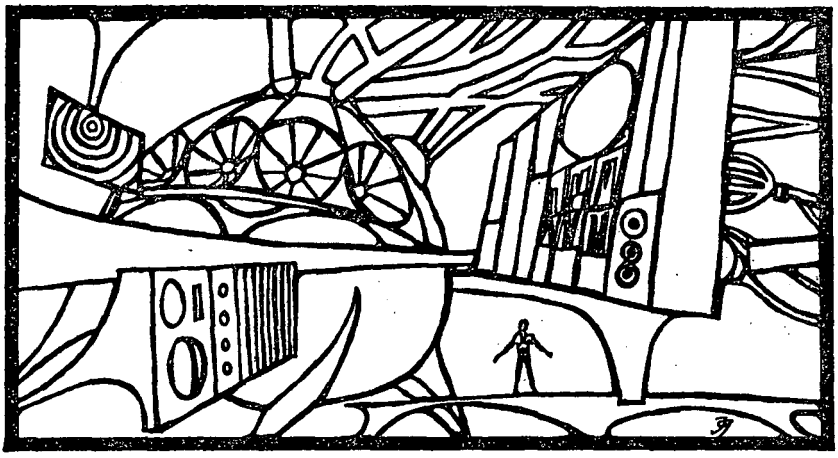

Sum totallings of men lie here
And not the sum of all machines
This is man's weather, his winter,
His wedding forth of time and place and will,
His downfell snow,
The tidings of his soul.
This paper avalanche sounds off his slope
And drowns the precipice of time with white.
This tossed confetti celebrates his nightmare
Or his joy.
The night begins and goes and ends with him.
No machinery opens forth the champagne jars of life.
No piston churns the laundered beds to summon light.
Remember this:
Machines are dead, and dead must ever lie,
If Man so much as shuts up half one eye.

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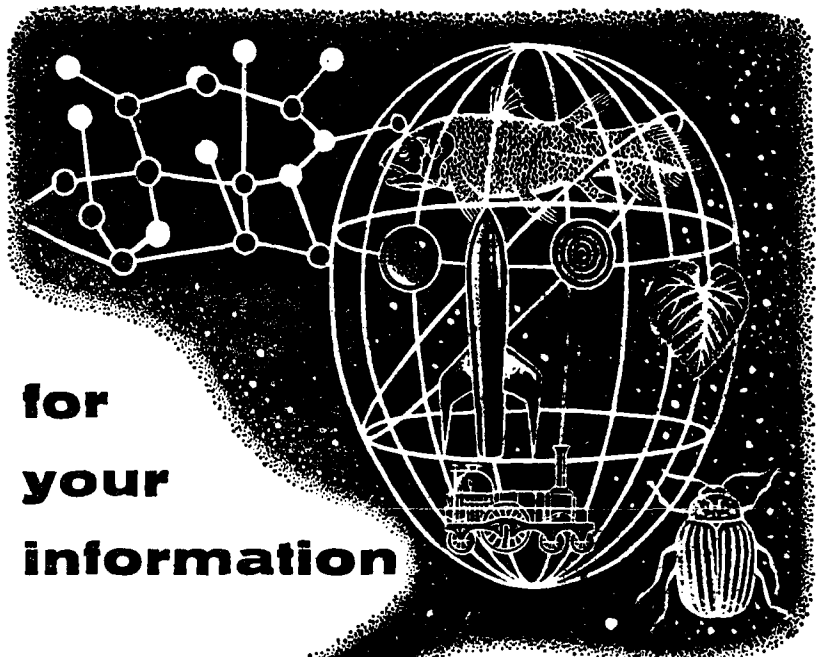

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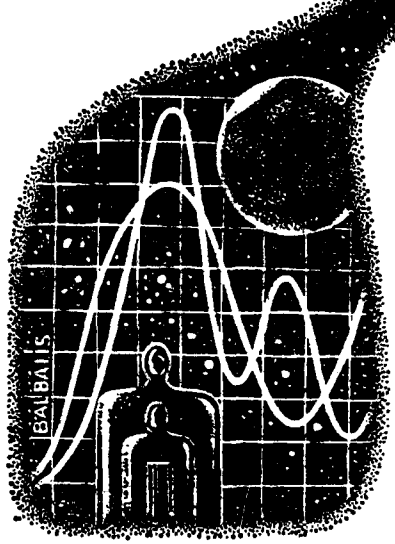

FIFTEEN YEARS OF GALAXY — THIRTEEN YEARS OF F.Y.I.

Galaxy Magazine is 15 years old with this issue, but my column is not, even though I was represented in Vol. I. No. 1. It was an article on Flying Saucers, written at the editor's request and then considerably shortened by the same editor — but I no longer recall just what it was he snipped out. Flying Saucers were

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a recent (phenomenon) at the time, stories about them had been in the daily press for about three years running. And while three years of stories without the faintest bit of evidence that would be considered as such in a court of law made me quite doubtful, one could not yet dismiss the whole thing.

I did not say so in print, but I had a nagging feeling that the "saucers" would turn out to be something like the case of the "Washington D.C. hair fetishist" that occupied space in the Washington newspaper at the same time when the first flying saucer report from Boise, Idaho, made the front pages of the same newspaper which I read with great astonishment while sitting in the street car that brought me to my laboratory in College Park, Maryland, every morning. What happened was this: a girl turned up at the police station (or at the newspaper office, I don't know which, since I paid no attention to the first report) claiming that somebody had cut off a heavy strand of her beautiful blonde hair while she was riding one of these self-same street cars during the morning rush hour. The police had hardly started an investigation, when another girl told the same story. Two days later a third incident occurred. I don't know at what point the police grew suspicious, the newspapers did at about the seventh case, when the assailant was described as a young blond man — but the damage he had done was hard to see.

That girl then admitted that she only had wanted to get her picture into the newspaper. Then the "case" before her admitted deception and so all the way back to the first case where the loss of hair had been due to an accident — with the afterthought that it should be exploited in some way.

Now, eighteen years after the first flying saucer report in the Washington papers and fifteen years after my article in the first issue of *Galaxy* I see a great deal of similarity in the two performances.

During the second year of *Galaxy*'s existence I contributed a few scattered articles, one on the "Loon" missile which then received a great deal of publicity (in retrospect I fail to see why), one on the African aardvark and one on the "meteoric procession" of February 9, 1913.

The last one, I admit, was written for the purpose of pointing out that there can be very strange displays in the sky that have perfectly natural causes. Of course, neither efficient aircraft nor atom bombs existed in 1913,

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hence people seeing something unusual had less reason to become jittery.

The first regular column appeared in the March issue of 1952, the idea that I should write a regular column, ranging at random over the whole field of science, originated with Horace L. Gold, the first editor. The overall title of the column, I was told, was suggested by Theodore Sturgeon. Everything else was up to me, except that there was a rule in the beginning, that my column should resemble a newspaper column in that it consisted of a number of short items. And since *Galaxy* did not carry a regular "letters to the editor" feature, the letters containing scientific questions were shunted to me for incorporation in the column. As regular readers know, I still answer such letters in my column if I feel the answer might be of general interest; provided, of course, that I know the answer. But "answerable" letters do not come in frequently; the majority of the letters I receive either ask questions that have no answer (e.g. "what *are* quasars") or else the answer is not likely to be of general interest, as for example the title and publication date of a book my correspondent remembers incompletely.

But let me backtrack a bit to the scientific news events that were recent when *Galaxy* was started. There was, of course, the "atom bomb" as it was then called, the fission bomb as we call it now. To people who knew something about atomic energy it was clear that the fusion or hydrogen bomb would follow — its development was then ordered by President Truman in January 1950.

Two recent astronomical discoveries had been made by the same American astronomer, Gerard P. Kuiper. They were the fifth moon of Uranus which he had named Miranda (1948) and the second moon of Neptune which he had named Nereid (1949).

The active space age was still five years in the future when Vol. I., No. 1. of *Galaxy* appeared on the newsstands. Few people knew at the time that space had already been reached, namely by Bumper No. 5 on February 24, 1949. The rocket had been the fifth in a series of eight two-stage liquid fuel rockets, the first stage being an ex-German V-2, the upper stage a WAC-Corporal rocket developed in California. The upper stage reached a total altitude of 250 miles. It cannot be said that actual satellite plans of any kind existed at the time. A few years earlier Arthur C. Clarke had suggested

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the possibility of "Extra-terrestrial Relays", as he called them, in an article in the British Magazine *Wireless World*. These relays were three satellites in the 24-hour orbit— three "syncoms" as they would now be called. But this was mainly a suggestion pointing out what might be done in the future, it was not a detailed plan. I am happy to report that Arthur C. Clarke, after the first actual communications satellites had been put into orbit, received the Gold Medal of the Franklin Institute for his suggestion.

But the actual satellite plans came several years later, around 1953. Wernher von Braun's concept of a wheel-shaped manned space station received most of the publicity. I devoted two columns to the space station concept (April and May 1953 and then again in December 1962). It is still a good concept and I feel still confident that we'll build a space station of this kind at about the time of the first landing on the moon or soon afterwards. The first satellite project that was actually carried out, though with endless delay and countless heartaches, was, of course, Project Vanguard, to which the column in the September, 1956 issue was devoted.

The first astronomical discovery after *Galaxy* existed was that of the twelfth moon of Jupiter (J-XII) by Seth B. Nicholson on September 29, 1951, before my column existed. But it was reported in my column in the August issue of 1952. In 1954 the eighth moon of Jupiter (J-VIII) that had been "lost" was rediscovered with the aid of high-speed computers, but I had to pass this one up because I did not learn about it until about a year later.

All along I had to keep in mind that considerable time would go by between the writing of a column and its appearance on the newsstands. Even when *Galaxy* was still on a monthly schedule that time interval was seven weeks — and seven weeks would have required a special effort on the part of everybody, a twelve week interval was closer to normal. Hence I was never able to pay much attention to "news" for by the time they could have appeared in *Galaxy* everybody had read about them. That long interval between writing and publication caused a few other complications too. Once, for example, I had prepared a piece on new manipulating devices, steel fingers that could not only handle red-hot metal or strongly radioactive substances but could also perform feats of strength simultaneously if their operator desired. I had even ob-

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tained a set of half a dozen photographs. But about three days before sending the material to the editor, *Life* Magazine devoted several of its pages to the same device, needless to say with *color* pictures. If I had gone ahead with my own piece it would have been the coldest of cold hash (or at least would have looked that way) so I put my photographs away for filing and wrote a different column in a hurry.

The fact that *Galaxy* is not a weekly — for which I am quite grateful, otherwise — also saw to it that a few articles never got written at all. There was one I remember: a nice thorough piece on communications satellites, carefully explaining their purpose, the way they worked, the orbits they should be in and so forth. By the time I had blocked out the piece itself and made a few diagrams, *Echo I* was put into orbit and was clearly visible to everybody. Now this required an additional section on "passive" communications satellites, those that only reflect radio waves without amplifying them. Naturally I had to wait for some results, nobody was quite sure at the moment how the performance of the early and naturally primitive "active" communications satellites would compare with that of the much bigger, though "passive" *Echo* satellite.

By the time such results became known, another active communications satellite had been thrown into orbit. Always keep in mind that I could not just wait, I still had to produce a column per issue and sometimes a subject needed two successive columns. So the article on communications satellites languished while other columns (equally interesting, I hope) saw the light of day. By the time I looked at my folder on this subject again, *Telstar I* was orbited, got front page articles everyplace *and* a double-spread in *Life*. Then I gave up, by now communications satellites had become so thoroughly known to the public that there was no use wasting space in *Galaxy* on them.

The same story was repeated at a somewhat later date with masers and lasers. To my knowledge this is the first time these words are mentioned in my column, but once they were intended to *be* a column. But the maser-laser story exhibited a strong kinship to the behavior of the mythological Hydra. Cut off one head and two new ones will grow. This is a gratifying thing as far as progress is concerned, but it can prevent a man from finishing an article he had in mind.

While I could not hope to keep

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up with a rapidly developing story, such as the space age with its hundreds of satellites, dozens of space probes and multiple spurts of development in all possible directions, an addition to an older discovery is often a fine starting point for a survey. This is especially the case if the older discovery is of the cliff-hanger type, of which *Latimeria* was the prime example of the first half of the twentieth century.

A few days before Christmas, 1938, a very strange fish had been brought ashore by a commercial fishing vessel at the port of East London on the east coast of South Africa. The fish was large-mouthed, bright blue in color, about four and a half feet long and had strangely shaped, very powerful fins. The captain of the trawler had never seen anything like this and neither had Miss M. Courtenay-Latimer, the curator of the local museum. She wrote to Professor J. L. B. Smith at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, who was an expert on the marine fishes of the area. But there were delays, when Prof. Smith finally got to East London, the internal organs of the fish had to be thrown out for very natural reasons — by now Miss Courtenay-Latimer would probably be able to drop it into a tank of liquid nitrogen and keep it, intestinal bacteria and all, nearly indefinitely. What was left was enough to convince Prof. Smith that a most unusual discovery had been made. It was one of the fishes known to paleontologists as coelacanth, a group that had been believed to be extinct for at least 50 million years.

The discovery was exciting for more than one reason. It was not only a "long extinct" form, it was also unusual in being much larger than any coelacanth known. The fossils usually measured only eight inches in length. A twelve-inch coelacanth was a big one and one incomplete fossil indicated an over-all length of twenty inches. The living version was fifty-five inches long, which had been the main reason why Prof. Smith had been doubtful about the sketch that had been enclosed in the letter he had received from Miss Courtenay-Latimer. The shape had suggested coelacanth and nothing else, but the measurements had spoken against that conclusion. (After the Second World War was over, a sixty-inch fossil coelacanth came to light in West Germany.)

Professor Smith named the fish *Latimeria chalumnae*, the species name was derived from the name of the river that empties into the ocean at East London. Naturally he wanted a fresh

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specimen. But he ran into two kinds of trouble. The first one was that the Second World War was underway and most people had other worries than supposedly extinct fishes, no matter how rare and how important to science. The second was that Smith had distributed his thousands of leaflets with a picture of the fish, a description and an offer of reward, in the wrong area. It so happens that the first specimen caught had strayed southward from its normal habitat by about 1,800 miles. Normally it can be found around the Comores Islands and the second specimen was found there, again just before Christmas, in 1952.

Now, that the normal habitat was known, the waiting time shrank; the third specimen was caught in September 1953 and the fourth in January 1954. Since the Comore Islands are French, French scientists took over and published preliminary reports on their observations and then a reasonably comprehensive popular report became possible. It appeared in the May, 1956, issue of *Galaxy*.

The year 1954 did not only bring additional information on the fish Latimeria, it also solved, in a rather unexpected manner, an older puzzle. During the years from 1908 to 1915 fossil bones had been found in southern England, near a place called Piltdown. In the end they produced a human skull, hailed as one of the earliest inhabitants of England named *Eoanthropus dawsonii*, or Dawson's Dawn Man.

In 1954 British paleontologists proved conclusively that the Dawn Man had been a hoax. The upper part of the skull actually was human and even fossil, but not particularly old. Now, that it is known what it is one may say of it that it does not present either a puzzle nor an insight. The lower jaw was the hoax, it was the jaw of an ape, almost certainly of an Orang-Utan. The whole jaw had been made to look and feel fossil with considerable skill and especially the teeth had been filed and otherwise treated to lose their pronounced apish character and to look like the worn teeth of a primitive human.

It must have been the work of many months to accomplish this and one can only wonder why some people devote so much work and so much skill to such a job. If a painter spends a year painting a "lost old master" and another year in "aging" the painting so that he can sell it at a high price his behavior is unethical, despicable and criminal; but one can at least see the reason! But whoever changed the Orang-Utan jaw around neither

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reaped reward nor questionable fame.

Of course it had been just the combination of a fairly modern skulltop and a most primitive-looking lower jaw which had made Piltdown man such a scientific puzzle. As soon as the fact that it was a forgery had been published, I started reading up on everything that had been written about Piltdown man while it was believed to be genuine.

I could do most of this reading at home because my library is full of books on paleontology; a recent count revealed that I own more books on paleontology than on rockets, missiles and space travel — due, no doubt, to the fact that paleontologists have been around for a much longer time than space scientists and had more time to write. At any event, the results were surprising. The French authors I consulted usually made short shift of Piltdown man, just mentioning the characteristics and ending up with: "more investigation is necessary". In retrospect this almost sounds as if they were suspicious, but they probably were just puzzled. An Austrian expert, Prof. Othenio Abel, devoted a great deal of space to Piltdown man, but ended up with precisely the same sentence, though in another language. British authors tried hard to fit Piltdown man in with other fossil humans and pre-humans, but naturally without any good result. German authors did the same and one or two of them voiced a suspicion. It was not the suspicion of forgery (nobody thought of that) but possibly it was a fossil *ohne Beweiskraft,* a fossil that did not prove anything. What they did was to ponder the possibility that Piltdown man, when alive, had not been typical of its tribe but had been a freak.

If one started with the lower jaw one should expect a somewhat smaller skullcap of different built. But possibly just this individual had an abnormally large (for its type) skull. This did not necessarily make him a genius; even now a moron occasionally has an extra large brain, a brain that is voluminous but fails to function properly. Or else, beginning with the skull and considering the skull as normal for its type, we had the bad luck to find the remains of an individual with a lower jaw that was a throwback to a much earlier type. Maybe, if the whole skeleton were known, some other deformities would be found.

The write-ups of Piltdown man showed an extraordinary expenditure of words like "perhaps", "possibly", "if one assumes", and so forth — quite naturally be-

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cause the fossil in question was not genuine, as finally proved by the two British experts. But Piltdown man never had a column devoted to him and I no longer remember why not. I had all of the material available, most of it even at home. I can only conclude that something else which I considered to be of more interest to my readers got in the way at the time. Or possibly I felt that it had been sufficiently covered elsewhere — people who do articles for science-fiction magazines are always aware that their readers read many other journals too.

Anybody who sits back thinking about the scientific discoveries of the last fifteen years is likely to fall into the trap of believing that most of them were due to the space effort. True, the space effort is responsible for a number of them, among them things nobody expected to find, but this fifteen year period also produced great strides elsewhere. Not even all the astronomical discoveries are due to the space effort.

Very early in 1956 — and the active space age began late in 1957 if a reminder of the date should be necessary — Dr. Gerard P. Kuiper pointed out that the unusual orbit of Pluto could best be explained by assuming that Pluto is a "run-away moon" of Neptune. (The same suggestion had been made in 1936 by R. R. Lyttleton in England but had failed to attract much attention.) This was an item I expected to remain confined to astronomical journals, hence it was written up in the column for the August 1956 issue.

Another astronomical discovery was made in the process of being accomplished at the same time by the discoverer of Pluto, Dr. Clyde W. Tombaugh. But this one was connected with the space age. That there would be artificial satellites soon, and probably both Russian and American, was certain in 1955. Of course they would have to be tracked and one man even assumed that our military men intended to track the Russian satellites somewhat more carefully than our own. But there was a possible problem, hadn't there been a number of reports, never confirmed to be sure, about small satellites of earth? If they really existed they would confuse the trackers. The thing to do was to establish the orbits of such minor satellites, if they existed.

Clyde W. Tombaugh proposed a method for such a search and designed the necessary instrumentation which was not only small enough to be carried on a truck, but sensitive enough (in

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a phrase that was to become famous) "to detect a white tennis ball in orbit a hundred miles from the surface, and a V-2 rocket, if painted white, at the distance of the moon." In 1957 his report was out, and I could tell of the results of the search in my column for the July, 1957, issue. The result had been negative, there were no minor satellites of earth so that anything that could be detected and tracked had to be artificial.

Two other astronomical discoveries also have no direct connection with the space age. One is the discovery of the mysterious "quasi-stellar objects", something that was quickly shortened to "quasars" without improving our understanding of them. The discovery of the quasars was the result of radio astronomy. And the most recent discovery, announced only four days prior to my writing this, is the result of using radar techniques. It is the discovery that planet Mercury does *not* have a period of rotation of 88 days, as Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli had announced in 1889. The orbital period is 88 days and Schiaparelli's announcement therefore meant that Mercury always points the same hemisphere toward the earth. The outcome of Schiaparelli's announcement had been several fascinating concepts: the scorched "brightside" with puddles of molten lead and tin, the permanently frozen "darkside" where the remains of the former atmosphere of the planet lay frozen on the ground and, last but not least, the interesting "twilight belt" where the sun appeared above the horizon for a few days every 88 days.

Now it is known that Mercury rotates a little faster than once every 88 days, the preliminary figure is 65 days. But that means that the sun shines on every part of Mercury's surface for a fairly long time. No more permanently nearly red-hot brightside, no more permanently frozen darkside. And no more twilight belt. Mercury is still a most inhospitable planet, but it has lost the distinctive features we thought were there.

Of course some of the major discoveries are the outcome of putting instruments into space. The first big discovery was that of the inner Van Allen belt in 1958, accomplished by *Explorer I,* the first American artificial satellite which, incidentally, is still in orbit. Later the outer Van Allen belt was found by another space device. Then we have the first determination of the thickness of the cloud layer of Venus, its incredible height above the surface of Venus and the measurement

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of the very high surface temperature of the planet, all carried out by *Mariner II*. We have the very sharp and detailed photographic close-ups of the surface of the moon, produced by *Rangers VII, VIII* and *IX*. And by the time you read this we may have some nice close-up photographs of Mars, transmitted over more than sixty million miles of space by *Mariner IV*.

Some of the very important discoveries other than space can only be mentioned here: increased (though still fragmentary) understanding of the inner structure of the atom; vastly increased understanding (not yet quite complete) of the basic mechanism of life and especially of heredity; and the interesting and completely unexpected discovery that at least the heaviest ones of the so-called noble gases, namely xenon and krypton, *will* form chemical compounds, in spite of what every chemical handbook has said for the last half century.

But many of the mysteries that were written up at one time or another in my column, are still mysteries. Of the clouds of Venus, we now know the extent, but we still don't know their chemical composition, though the top layer seems to consist of ice crystals. The Red Spot of Jupiter is still unexplained, the *Gegenschein* is still a mystery in spite of (or rather because of) four different explanations. We still don't know when and how ball lightning will form. And the large rotating "luminous wheels" of the Indian Ocean certainly need more investigation. And I refuse to think about quasars until more is known.

I suspect, however, that the majority of these mysteries will have been explained, not another fifteen years from now but in about five years.—WILLY LEY

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A Better Mousehole

by EDGAR PANGBORN

Trouble with those blue bugs was they didn't hurt you . . . they did something far worse!

So now Irma will be at me to do something about them blue bugs. I got to do something about Irma.

Dr. West is wise too, as good as said so when him and Judge Van Anda was in today for a couple beers. Pity Dr. West is not the doctoring type doctor but just has letters and stuff. Sort of explorer people say, account of his Independent Income, gone for months till the town's forgot him and then he turns up full of what the bull was done with.

I don't think the Judge knows about the blue bugs. If they bit him like they done me he'd never go to dreaming, not him up there, six feet five, looking back at what he thinks the world used to be. Still if you was old like him, you might want big dreams more than ever, about being young.

If you could *tell* them bugs, if you could name your own dream! No way, I guess. I take the dreams I can get.

Dr. West certainly knows something. I'd no sooner drawed them beers when he starts mentioning mice. I told him, Look, I said, you do not see the Health Department climbing all over my back the way they would if I had mice. He asks me, so what is that hole in the floor below the liquor shelves? I had to make like hunt-

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ing for it, and act surprised. Knothole, I says. Oh, knothole, he says, knothole the regal twin-cushioned back of my lap, how come a knothole in linoleum? So I had to say it could be mice. Judge Van Anda says Ha.

I went down the bar to pass the time with Lulu who doesn't get much business in the afternoon because the light is too strong. Lulu is like blonde this week. If only I could tell the bugs to put Lulu into a dream with me! The only time they done it she turned into Irma. I can't figure that.

What if Lulu got bit and had some dreams herself?

I suppose Irma thinks I married her so I can't do nothing without she comes clomping in onto it? If she's solid gold why don't she move to Fort Knox?

I had not hardly started talking to Lulu when Dr. West goes to booming. Desolation, he says, do you think you know what desolation is? It's the sub-Arctic tundra, he says, and me alone in that borrowed Cessna that might've got its engine tuned three or four months earlier, and no reason to be there except my itch to see more of the poor wonderful planet before they blow it up. Lulu, what do you think? What do you say desolation is?

Oh, she says, maybe the Stadium, game over, crowd gone and you know, empty popcorn bags and match cards and spit.

You, Al? he says to me. What's desolation?

I said, oh, maybe a dark night and nobody shows you where to go. I believe Dr. West is sad in his heart in spite of that education which is over my head. It would be like him to take off in a borrowed plane for the flat side of nowhere. I like to watch him standing by Judge Van Anda who he is always telling siddown siddown and the Judge merely says Ha. I can feel sad without no Independent Income. I am 42 and I have this ulcer.

The tundra, says Dr. West — a nothing of dun colors, rotting snow, and you wonder when the whole earth will look like that.

No! says Lulu about to cry. Don't talk thataway!

Never mind, chicken, he says, I was just bleating.

Suppose you took Irma to this here Tundra and told her to walk home. Flies, she says last night, flies all over you and you drunk as a pig. God, I pretty near shut her up for good. But she just don't know no better. She don't have too much of a life with a busted-down hack like me that couldn't even last five rounds with Willie Donohue.

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Dr. West went on about borrowing a plane from a friend has got this lodge in the north woods, and flying over the tundra till he saw like a blue spark down there. Landed and picked up the object, size and shape of a basketball he said, not really blue, more like daylight split and turned a million ways. It hummed when he held it to his ear. That's when he broke off to ask me is there a basement under this part of the bar.

He knows damn well it's got no basement. He was in town when I got this addition added on. Already a cellar under the main part, I didn't need another, got this part done with merely the footing and concrete under the lino, I mean if there is any excavation in forty miles Dr. West will be there watching. It's the people with an Independent Income or them with not any that get the excavation watched. Guys like me that work for a living, we are up that creek with a little bity plastic spoon and no breeze. All's I said was Hell no, this here is an addition was added on, it's got no basement.

Unless somebody walled it off on you, says Judge Van Anda. You won't find a better way to dispose of a body, the Judge says, that's if you have time and materials and don't mind the labor. Well, the Judge is retired after forty years on what they call the bench, and keeps saying with his experience he ought to write detective stories. Yes sir, he says, if the walling off has been done right, proper pains taken, you can give the whole thing a very attractive finish. I guess he meant the wall. You never know, with the Judge. I must of said to him a hundred times, Look, I've said, the surprising type things that have happened to me, you ought to put them into a book if you're going to write one. He just goes hrrm hrrm and Ha.

I hated him sounding off about bodies that way, account of Lulu's nerves. Before Dr. West begun his story Lulu was talking to me about that murderer over to Lincolnsville, the one that done in his whole family with a kitchen knife, and the shooting down in Jonesburg a couple weeks ago. She was real nerved up. His whole family, and with a plain kitchen knife. When the cops come for him — Jesus, he was like asleep, it said. Lulu takes the news pretty personal, it's the woman of it.

Dr. West's little blue eyes — why, damn, they're near the same color as my bugs, like sky with the sun caught in it.

Maybe the bugs are something new to science that Dr. West has to keep top secret? Then this

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tundra story would be the educated crappola he's obliged to shovel over it? His eyes are bloodshot like mine have been getting the last few weeks. I been losing weight too and it ain't my ulcer. The blood the bugs take out couldn't make no such difference, and them so gentle — I float off into the dreams almost as soon as they come settle on me.

I'd give anything to have another dream where Irma is like when we got married, not bony and mean but soft, brown hair with all them goldy lights, voice like country cream.

When Dr. West quit talking Lulu was crying. She says she feels sometimes like everything was on top of her, usually goes to the Ladies and comes back with a rebuilt mouth and a fresh bounce to her. Lulu could put her shoes in my trunk any time. She ain't had a real happy life.

Aw, who does? For young people it's always a maybe-tomorrow, for the rest, it's where-did-everything-go? The Judge, he should be happy looking across all them years of playing God and sticking people in jail? Dr. West never married, chases moonblink over the world with his Independent Income, but once he told me what he honestly craved was hearth and home, nice woman to warm his slippers and his bed, only a devil in him couldn't ever let him rest. And I have this ulcer.

The Bible or somebody says if you build a better mousetrap they'll like put you on teevy. All's I got is a better mousehole. What do they give you for that?

Dr. West waited till Lulu come back from the Ladies to go on with his story. He wasn't telling it for her, though, spite of her coming to sit on the stool by him and give him a feel or two for friendship's sake. Not for the Judge neither. It was for me and that hole in the floor. I could of told him they never come out till I close the bar and dim the lights.

He said he smuggled the blue ball home, not a word to anyone. As a story it wasn't nothing, which is one reason I can't believe he was making it up. He kept calling the thing a sphere. I always thought a sphere was some type musical instrument.

When he says home he means the ram-and-shackle mansion at the edge of town with back land running up Ragged Rock Hill and Johnny Blood rattling around in the mansion being caretaker with one eye that used to be an actor and still lets go with some Shakespeare if anything startles him. He said he sent Johnny away for two

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months vacation to this sister in Maine who has been trying to make Johnny come to Jesus anyhow thirty-forty years, only when Johnny hears that special tone of voice he shuts the good eye and lets go with something from this Shakespeare.

I wish I had the education to make with Shakespeare when Irma is at me about talking to Lulu or drinking up the profits which I never could do with this ulcer unless I would drop dead, she never thinks of that, or why don't I at least try to earn enough we would spend winters in Florida if I had any zing.

Sent Johnny away, he says, and kept the sphere at room temperature. Dr. West is always talking thataway. A room don't run a temperature, or if he means hot like some room what's so scientific if somebody monkeys with the thermostack or leaves the God-damn door open?

Winter in Florida for Christ's sake.

The blue thing hatched one night after he'd gone to bed — except he says it was not an egg but a figure of speech. He found the two halves in the morning not chipped like a hatched egg, just separated, like they'd been fitted together originally so good you couldn't find the joint. Nothing else disturbed, but a hole in the window-screen that looked like it was melted through, the ends of copper wire fused so the hole looked like a grommet.

Judge Van Anda asked him did he keep the busted eggshell. Dr. West says, Now I did try to make it plain it was not an egg, nor do I know why I waste my experiences on you, like when I showed that comb my mermaid gave me it could of been a paper clip, all the impression it made. So it could, says the Judge kind of brisk, seeing they make such combs in Bridgeport and you can buy them in any drugstore for upwards of nineteen cents plus tax. All right, says Dr. West, so if she did happen on it in the billows off Bridgeport, God damn it, she *gave* it to me, didn't she? Oh, don't get red-eyed about it, says Judge Van Anda.

I'm not, says Dr. West. Al's the one with bloodshot eyes, late hours likely. He was watching me real sharp. No sir, you too, Sid, says the Judge, you look in the mirror you'll see you're red-eyed like a weasel, I snow you not. Now if you could have brought home just one mermaid scale. And Dr. West says they do not have scales, no more reason to have scales than a seal or a whale or any other ocean-dwelling mammal. Ocean-dwelling mahooha, says Judge Van Anda.

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And I suppose, says Dr. West, back there ninety-six years ago in the little red schoolhouse the only biology you ever learned was out in the bushes during recess. Which was a friendly remark because the Judge could go hrrm reminding himself how he wants you to think he used to be. All the same I quick took them another round of beers.

Lulu says, You got out of that too easy, Doc. I remember she pushed her shoulders back showing what she has got. She could put her shoes in my trunk any time. She says, Do you still have the eggshell or do you don't?

I do not, says Dr. West. I do not still possess the two halves of that vehicle.

Well excuse me for living, says Lulu, but she wasn't mad. She likes everybody, you could call it a weakness.

And why don't you? says the Judge. As if I didn't know.

Because, says Dr. West, I carried them outdoors to see them in the sun, was disturbed by the telephone, set them down in a thicket, answered the phone, at which you bent my ear for a half-hour about a detective story you plan to start writing any day. When I got back the two halves were gone.

Naturally, says the Judge. Naturally.

Gone, says Dr. West, from a patch of soft earth in the thicket that showed no footprints.

We left it at that. Ever since, I been thinking about it. Only minutes now till closing time or I would flip my lid.

Dr. West was not lying or he would of done a mermaid story. That don't mean it was the whole truth. How could anybody ever tell that like they say in the law courts? Maybe the bugs bit him before they went off through the hole in the screen? One bite would be enough to show him what it does to you. Could we sort of share them?

I would like that. Something's gentled me down lately. I got no jealousy about him and Lulu going off together like they done this afternoon. I don't seem to have no angry feelings of no kind except about drowning Irma in the bathtub if it was practical. Aw, I guess I mean I might make that type joke, a man couldn't *do* no such thing. Besides it could be my fault Irma is like she is. How about that, Al?

Anyhow I'd sooner Lulu went off with Dr. West than with say this salesman looks like a shaved pig and wants a beer.

Beer. Why can't they ask for something unusual just once so I would have to think about it and stop thinking?

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Five minutes still to closing.

It was last night Irma found me with my bugs and called them flies. I bet she believes that. It was the finest part of my dream — gone, clobbered, and here's Irma in her nightgown come down and turned on the light, standing there all bones and bad temper saying Drunk as a pig, now I see where the profits go, all down your gut. Her that used to talk like a lady, and had them goldy lights in her hair. Flies, she says, flies everywhere.

She don't know about the hole, my better mousehole, or she would of poured cleaning fluid down it, and they would of come out and fixed her little red wagon. I would not like that to happen. It's funny how gentle I feel nowadays. I used to be what they call a Ruffed Diamond.

I guess Irma will have took her twenty-year grouch to bed by now. Oh no, it wasn't like that all of them twenty years, not by no means — but my Jesus, I'm supposed to be some damn God-almighty Apollo Valentino Rockefeller or I'm no good? I'm good in them dreams. I been seven feet tall and bronzy, ready whenever I said so.

There they go again about that thing in Jonesburg where the lady shot up a radio-teevy store account she claimed the noise spoiled her dreams. Look — things like that — it can't mean these bugs are —

I won't have a dream tonight though. I won't, till I can get a real talk with Dr. West. Well, speak of the —

It has come to be morning, hot and quiet outside in that golden street. I better try to think through what happened, and what Dr. West said.

When he come in at closing time I seen he wanted talk same as me. I told him stick around, I closed up, doused the front lights, we carried a Jameson into the back room. He flung down a shot and said, I took Lulu up to my place. The Judge too. Johnny Blood'll be gone another couple weeks, but I suppose maybe the Judge'll be missed.

Missed? I says.

He says, Don't be like that, Al. The Judge is asleep and dreaming, Lulu is asleep and dreaming, and don't you go acting surprised on me, because I come back to talk to you. Beat-up crocks like you and me, Al, he says, we're into middle age, we can wait a mite longer for our dreams, seeing we've spent mor'n half a lifetime doing not much else.

While I poured him another he said, it was Lulu brought them back to me. I asked him how come.

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She didn't do anything, he says, she's just overweight with a big blood pressure. They like that. They must need the blood, maybe to help them breed. Only a couple dozen came out of that sphere, but now they might have several colonies. I wasn't quite truthful, he says — I saw them come out, and a few of them flew around me with things in the fifth pair of limbs that looked like weapons. While I held still because of that, one of them bit me and I dreamed a journey to Alpha Centauri.

Maybe, he says, they always do it merely to hold us quiet so they can drink. Maybe it's from lovingkindness.

I asked if it was true what he'd told us about the halves of the shell disappearing. Yes, he said, and he said that afterward he went searching and grieving all over till one night he caught a bluish gleam up on Ragged Rock Hill. He went to it, working his way through the trees with a flashlight to where he thought it had showed, and settled down to wait. Sure enough they came and gave him a dream. It breaks his heart too, the way a man can't name his own.

They come for Lulu. All we did, he says, we turned off the lights and set by the open window. Coming for Lulu because she's right for them, they took care of the Judge too, and me. My dream was a short one, Al. I don't have much blood in me.

He put down another Jameson while I told him what I been going through. He stepped over to one of the other back-room booths to pick something off the floor. He's a noticing restless man. Just a buckle like a gold rosebud off of a girl's shoe. The back room gets lively Saturday nights, and I ain't been sweeping up too good, last couple-three weeks. Only light I turned on for us was the 25-watt bulb in our booth with the pink shade—Irma chose them shades. They're real nice. You won't find no Goddamn interior desecrator that's got taste like hers. Dr. West set there playing with that gold rosebud and going slow on his Jameson while I talked.

And I asked him, where do they come from?

Oh, he says, outer space, where else? He was turning the buckle in and out of the light, reflecting a glow into the drink itself, a kind of glory. And he says, or else inner space.

I asked him did he think the bugs had anything to do with them killings. He just wiggled his shoulders.

That's when I said, Look,

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couldn't my Irma have a dream? He give me no answer. I says, maybe it would change how she acts and feels about some things?

Maybe, he says. We don't know, he says, we don't know much of anything. More we know, better we get at asking questions we can't answer. Then he poured himself another Jameson and after a while I went upstairs.

Irma wasn't asleep. When I touched her shoulder she says, God give me patience! and flounces clear acrost the bed. I says, Irma, honey, I ain't after you thataway, I just want you should come down talk something over with I and Doc West. West? she says. That dirty old man? What for?

I says, Irma, this is special, you give me lip I'm big enough to make you. You get up and fling some clothes on and you take that God-damn cold cream off your face and come down. All's we want is have a couple drinks, talk something over.

Well, she says, aren't *we* the lord and master all of a sudden! You goddam right, I says, and get going. I didn't say that mean, nor she didn't take it mean, just wiped the guck off her face as meek as anything, put on slippers, and a bathrobe over her p-js, and come along. In the light of the upstairs hall I seen some of them goldy lights, I know I did.

Dr. West had laid his head on his arms. Small he was, and clean as a dry stick, I don't know why she would call him a dirty old man. He hadn't finished his Jameson. I thought he was having a dream, for the bugs had come, but he looked up and said, I brought it on us, I brought it on the world. I and some other billions, he said. I don't understand what he meant by that.

Irma seen the bugs and she screamed. Only five-six of them, nothing scary. I put my arms around her to gentle her. Irma, I says, all they do is give you beautiful dreams. I want you should have some like I've had. Let 'em bite a little, it don't hurt. But she screamed and tried to fight me off. She said, I don't want to, I just want — I just want —

I didn't listen. So hell-bent she should have dreams like mine, I didn't listen. The way she was perking around, the p-js got twisted away from her little breasts, and I just hung on, too lame-brain dumb for anything else. Them little things is like when she was a girl, I used to kid her about what would the babies eat, only we never could have any. One bug lit there, and I just held her — why, them bites

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don't hurt, I got a hundred onto me, they don't even itch.

She didn't scream again. I felt a shock go through her and she said, Oh, oh, oh, a kind of crying like what I used to hear in bed, and her with a voice like country cream. The bug flew off. I found her mouth and kissed her. Her face sagged away from me and she was dead.

I think Dr. West said, your little lady, she's asleep?

I carried her over to this lounge chair, sat here with her. I don't know what to do. I remember Dr. West, he come over and stood by us, though I wanted him to go away. I know I said something about maybe some people just couldn't have such dreams.

He says, maybe it's that, or maybe she dreamed *more* than us, Al. Maybe this thing gave her too big a dream for her to stand. Dreaming's a dangerous thing, he said, it's got a dark side. If the bugs shoot in something that makes the dreaming part of us blaze up, the way the rest of us can't take it—

I told him I wasn't going to try to understand it no more. I said I ought to knowed you can't make another person have a dream. It's not right, it's not right some-way.

Dr. West said more, I can't just bring it back. I think he said, dreaming's not a sickness but it's like one, partly. It made the world what it is, different from ancient days, and it could unmake it.

I asked him not to notify no one, just go away and leave us be.

People will figure the bar is closed, they'll give us a bit of time before they start crowding in.

And there was something he said about how things might even get better with the bugs taking over, if that's what they meant to do. I told him I didn't care much about the world, all's I ever wanted was to have a decent life with work I knowed how to do and a nice woman and maybe some kids. I guess that's when Dr. West went away. He's just a lonesome little guy trying to figure things out, I shouldn't of spoke harsh.

See, it wasn't like I was trying to make you have *my* dream.

You look like you was dreaming. You look real sweet, I meant to tell you. I don't know why I couldn't ever tell you.

—EDGAR PANGBORN

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THREE TO A GIVEN STAR

by CORDWAINER SMITH

Illustrated by MORROW

They were the outcasts of Earth, and Earth had given them a destiny that fitted their terrible crimes!

I

"Stick your left arm straight forward, Samm," said Folly.

He stretched his arm out.

"I can sense it!" cried Folly. "Now wiggle your fingers!"

Samm wiggled them.

Finsternis said nothing, but both of them caught from his mind, riding clear and wise beside them, a "sense of the situation." His "sense of the situation" could be summed up in the one-word comment, which he did not need to utter:

"Foolishness!"

"It is not foolishness, Finsternis," cried Folly. "Here are the

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three of us, riding empty space millions of kilometers from nowhere. We are people once, Earth people from Old Earth Itself. Is it foolish to remember what we used to be? I was a woman once. A beautiful woman. Now I'm this —this thing, bent on a mission of murder and destruction. I used to have hands myself, real hands. Is it wrong for me to enjoy looking at Samm's hands now and then? To think of the past which all three of us have left behind."

Finsternis did not answer; his mind was blank to both of them. There was nothing but space around them, not even much space dust, and the bluish light of Linschoten XV straight ahead. From the third planet of that star they could occasionally hear the cackle and gabble of the man-eaters.

Once again Folly cried to Finsternis, "Is that so wrong, that I should enjoy looking at a hand? Samm has well-shaped hands. I was a person once, and so were you. Did I ever tell you that I was a beautiful woman once?"

She had been a beautiful woman once and now she was the control of a small spaceship which fled across emptiness with two grotesque companions.

She was now a ship only eleven meters long and shaped roughly like an ancient dirigible. Finsternis was a perfect cube, fifty meters to the side, packed with machinery which could blank out a sun and contain its planets until they froze to icy, perpetual death. Samm was a man, but he was a man of flexible steel, two hundred meters high. He was designed to walk on any kind of planet, with any kind of inhabitant, with any kind of chemistry or any kind of gravity: he was designed to bring antagonists, whomever they might be, the message of the power of man. The power of man . . . followed by terror, followed if necessary by death. If Samm failed, Finsternis had the further power of blocking out the sun, Linschoten XV. If either or both failed, Folly had the job of adjusting them so that they could win. If they had no chance of winning, she then had the task of destroying Finsternis and Samm, and then herself.

Their instructions were clear:

"You will not, you will not under any circumstances return. You will not, you will not under any conditions turn back toward Earth. You are too dangerous to come anywhere near Earth, ever again. You may live if you wish. If you can. But you must not — repeat *not* — come back. You have your duty. You asked for it. Now you have it. Do not, come back. Your forms

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fit your duty. You will do your duty."

Folly had become a tiny ship, crammed with miniaturized equipment.

Finsternis had become a cube blacker than darkness itself.

Samm had become a man, but a man different from any which had ever been seen on Earth. He had a metal body, copied from the human form down to the last detail. That way the enemies, whoever they might be, would be given a terrible glimpse of the human shape, the human voice. Two hundred meters high he stood, strong and solid enough to fly through space with nothing but the jets on his belt.

The Instrumentality had designed all three of them. Designed them well.

Designed them to meet the crazy menace out beyond the stars, a menace which gave no clue to its technology or origin, but which responded to the signal "man" with the counter-signal, "gabble cackle! eat, eat! man, man! good to eat! cackle-gabble! eat, eat!"

That was enough.

The Instrumentality took steps. And the three of them—the ship, the cube and the metal giant—sped between the stars to conquer, to terrorize or to destroy the menace which lived on the third planet of Linschoten XV. Or, if needful, to put out that particular sun.

Folly, who had become a ship, was the most volatile of the three.

She had been a beautiful woman once.

II

"You were a beautiful woman once," Samm had said, some years before. "How did you end up becoming a ship?"

"I killed myself," said Folly. "That's why I took this name. Folly. I had a long life ahead of me, but I killed myself and they brought me back at the last minute. When I found out I was still alive, I volunteered for something adventurous, dangerous. They gave me this. Well, I *asked* for it, didn't I?"

"You asked for it," said Samm gravely. Out in the middle of nothing, surrounded by a tremendous lot of nowhere, courtesy was still the lubricant which governed human relationships. The two of them observed courtesy and kindness toward one another. Sometimes they threw in a bit of humor, too.

Finsternis did not take part in their talk or their companionship. He did not even verbalize his answers. He merely let them know his sense of the situation and this time, as in all other

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times, his response was—"Negative. No operation needed. Communication nonfunctional. Not needed here. Silence, please. I kill suns. That is all I do. My part is my business, not yours. My past is my business. All mine." This was communicated in a single terrible thought, so that Folly and Samm stopped trying to bring Finsternis into the conversations which they started up, every subjective century or so, and continued for years at a time.

Finsternis merely moved along with them, several kilometers away, but well within their range of awareness. But as far as company was concerned, Finsternis might as well not have been there at all.

Samm went on with the conversation, *the* conversation which they had had so many hundreds of times since the planoform ship had discharged them "near" Linschoten XV and left them to make the rest of their way alone. (If the menace were really a menace, and if it were intelligent, the Instrumentality had no intention of letting an actual planoform ship fall within the powers of a strange form of life which might well be hypnotic in its combat capacities. Hence the ship, the cube and the giant were launched into normal space at high velocity, equipped with jets to correct their courses, and left to make their own away to the danger.)

Samm said, as he always did, "You were a beautiful woman, Folly, but you wanted to die. Why?"

"Why do people ever want to die, Samm? It's the power in us, the vitality which makes us want so much. Life always trembles on the edge of disappointment. If we hadn't been vital and greedy and lustful and yearning, if we hadn't had big thoughts and wanted bigger ones, we would have stayed animals, like all the little things back on Earth. It's strong life that brings us so close to death. We can't stand the beauty of it, the nearness of the things we want, the remoteness of the things that we can have. You and me and Finsternis, now, we're monsters riding out between the stars. And yet we're happier now than we were when we were back among people. I was a beautiful woman, but there were specific things which I wanted. I wanted them myself. I alone. For me. Only for me. When I couldn't have them, I wanted to die. If I had been stupider or happier I might have lived on. But I didn't. I was me—intensely me. So here I am. I don't even know whether I have a body or not, inside this ship. They've got me all hooked up to the sensors and the viewers and the computers. Some-

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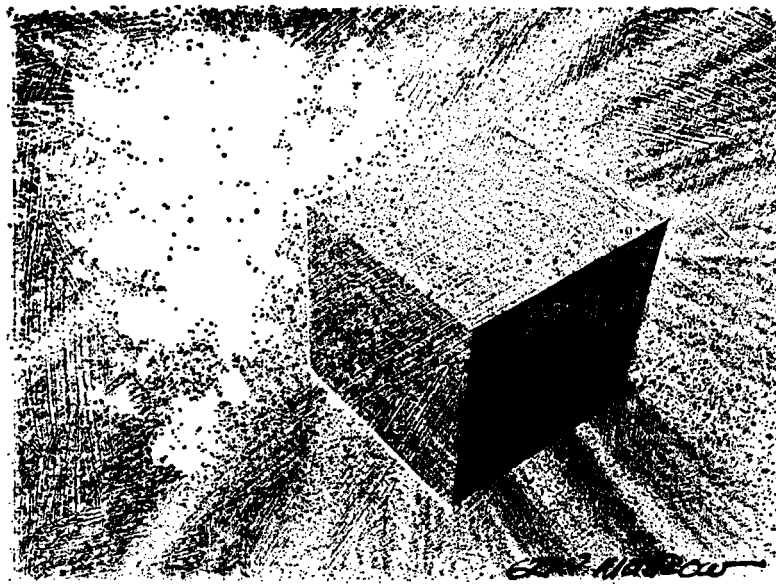

times I think that I may be a lovely woman still, with a real body hidden somewhere inside this ship, waiting to step out and to be a person again. And you, Samm, don't you want to tell me about yourself? Samm. SAMM. That's no name for an actual person — Superordinated Alien Measuring and Mastery device. What were you before they gave you that big body? At least you still look like a person. You're not a ship, like me."

"My name doesn't matter, Folly, and if I told it to you, you wouldn't know it. You never knew it."

"How wouldn't I know?" she cried. "I've never told you my name either, so perhaps we did know each other back on Old Earth when we were still people."

"I can tell something," said Samm, "from the shape of words, from the ring of thoughts, even when we're not out here in nothing. You were a lady, perhaps highborn. You were truly beautiful. You were really important. And I—I was a technician. A good one. I did my work and I loved my family, and my wife and I were happy with every child which the Lords gave us for adoption. But my wife died first. And after a while my children, my wonderful boy and my two beautiful, intelligent girls—

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my own children, they couldn't stand me anymore. They didn't like me. Perhaps I talked too much. Perhaps I gave them too much advice. Perhaps I reminded them of their mother, who was dead. I don't know. I won't ever know. They didn't want to see me. Out of manners, they sent me cards on my birthday. Out of sheer formal courtesy, they called on me sometimes. Now and then one of them wanted something. Then they came to me, but it was always just to get something. It took me a long time to figure out, but I hadn't done anything. It wasn't what I had done or hadn't done. They just plain didn't like me. You know the songs and the operas and the stories, Folly, you know them all."

"Not all of them," thought Folly gently, "not all of them. Just a few thousand."

"Did you ever see one," cried Samm, his thoughts ringing fiercely against her mind, "did you ever see a single one about a rejected father? They're all about men and women, love and sex, but I can tell you that rejection hurts even when you don't ask anything of your loved ones but their company and their happiness and their simple genuine smiles. When I knew that my children had no use for me, I had no use for me either. The Instrumentality came along with this warning, and I volunteered."

"But you're all right now, Samm," said Folly gently. "I'm a ship and you are a metal giant but we're off doing work which is important for all mankind. We'll have adventures together. Even black and grumbly here," she added, meaning Finsternis, "can't keep us from the excitement of companionship or the hope of danger. We're doing something wonderful and important and exciting. Do you know what I would do if I had my life again, my ordinary life with skin and toenails and hair and things like that?"

"What?" asked Samm, knowing the answer perfectly well from the hundreds of times they had touched on this point.

"I'd take baths. Hundreds and hundreds of them, over again. Showers and dips in cold pools and soaks in hot bathtubs and rinses and more showers. And I would do my hair, over and over again, thousands of different ways. And I would put on lipstick, in the most outrageous colors, even if nobody saw me, except for my own self looking in the mirror. Now I can hardly remember what it used to be to be dry or wet. I'm in this ship and I see the ship and I do not really know if I am a person or not any more."

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Samm stayed quiet, knowing what she would say next.

"Samm, what would you do?" Folly asked.

"Swim," he said.

"Then swim, Samm, swim! Swim for me in the space between the stars. You still have a body and I don't, but I can watch you and I can sense you swimming out here in the nothing-at-all."

Samm began to swim a huge Australian crawl, dipping his face to the edge of the water—as if there were water there. The gestures made no difference in his real motion, since they were all of them in the fast trajectory computed for them from the point where they left the Instrumentality's ship and started out in normal space for the star listed as Linschoten XV.

This time, something very sudden happened, and, it happened strangely.

From the dark gloomy silence of the cube Finsternis, there came an articulate cry, called forth in clear human speech:

Stop it! Stop moving right now. I attack.

Both Samm and Folly had instruments built into them, so they could read space around them. The instruments, quickly scanned, showed nothing. Yet Folly felt odd, as though something had gone very wrong in her ship-self, which had seemed so metal, so reliable, so inalterable.

She threw a thought of inquiry at Samm and instead got another command from Finsternis, *Don't think.*

III

Samm floated like a dead man in his gargantuan body.

Folly drifted like a fruit beside his hand.

At last there came words from Finsternis:

"You can think now, if you want to. You can chatter at each other again. I'm through."

Samm thought at him, and the thought-pattern was troubled and confused: "What happened? I felt as though the immaculate grid of space had been pinched together in a tight fold. I felt you do something, and then there was silence around us again."

"Talking," said Finsternis, "is not operational and it is not required of me. But there are only three of us here, so I might as well tell you what happened. Can you hear me, Folly?"

"Yes," she said, weakly.

"Are we on course," asked Finsternis, "for the third planet of Linschoten XV?"

Folly paused while checking all her instruments, which were more complicated and refined than those carried by the other two,

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since she was the maintenance unit. "Yes," said she at last. "We are exactly on course. I don't know what happened, if anything did happen."

"Something happened, all right," said Finsternis, with the gratified savagery of a person whose quick-and-cruel nature is rewarded only by meeting and overcoming hostility in real life. "Was it a space dragon, like they used to meet on the old, old ships?"

"No, nothing like that," said Finsternis, communicative for once, since this was something operational to talk about. "It doesn't even seem to be in this space at all. Something just rises up among us, like a volcano coming out of solid space. Something violent and wild and alive. Do you two still have eyes?"

"Seeing devices for the ordinary light band?" asked Samm.

"Of course we do!" said Finsternis. "I will try to fix it so that you will have a visible input."

There was a sharp pause from Finsternis.

The voice came again, with much strain.

"Do not do anything. Do not try to help me. Just watch. If it wins, destroy me and destroy yourselves very quickly. It might try to capture us and get back to Earth."

Folly felt like telling Finsternis that this was unnecessary, since the first motion toward return would trigger destruction devices which had been built into each of the three of them, beyond reach, beyond detection, beyond awareness. When the Instrumentality said, "Do *not* come back," the Instrumentality meant it.

She said nothing.

She watched Finsternis instead.

Something began to happen.

It was very odd.

Space itself seemed to rip and leak.

In the visible band, the intruder looked like a fountain of water being thrown randomly to and fro.

But the intruder was not water.

In the visible light-band, it glowed like wild fire rising from a shimmering column of blue ice. Here in space there was nothing to burn, nothing to make light: she knew that Finsternis was translating unresolvable phenomena into light.

She sensed Samm moving one of his giant fists uncontrollably, in a helpless, childish gesture of protest.

She herself did nothing but watch, as alertly and passively as she could.

Nevertheless, she felt wrenched. This was no material phenomenon. It was wild unformed life, intruding out of some other proportion of space, seeking ma-

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terial on which to impose its vitality, its frenzy, its identity. She could see Finsternis as a solid black cube, darker than mere darkness, drifting right into the column. She watched the sides of Finsternis.

On the earlier part of the trip, since they had left the people and the planoform ship and had been discharged in a fast trajectory toward Linschoten XV, Finsternis' sides had seemed like dull metal, slightly burnished, so that Folly had to brush him lightly with radar to get a clear image of him.

Now his sides had changed.

They had become as soft and thick as velvet.

The strange volcano-fountain did not seem to have much in the way of sensing devices. It paid no attention to Samm or to herself. The dark cube attracted it, as a shaft of sunlight might attract a baby or as the rustle of paper might draw the attention of a kitten.

With a slight twist of its vitality and direction, the whole column of burning, living brightness plunged upon Finsternis, plunged and burned out and went in and was seen no more.

Finsternis' voice, clear and cheerful, sounded out to both of them:

"It's gone now."

"What happened to it?" asked Samm.

"I ate it," said Finsternis.

"You what?" cried Folly.

"I ate it," said Finsternis. He was talking more than he ever had before. "At least, that's the only way I can describe it. This machine they gave me or made me into or whatever they did, it's really rather good. It's powerful. I can feel it absorbing things, taking them in, taking them apart, putting them away. It's something like eating used to be when I was a person. That wild thing attacked me, wrapped me up, devoured me. All I did was to take it in, and now it's gone. I feel sort of full. I suppose my machines are sorting our samples of it to send away to rendezvous points in little rockets. I know that I have sixteen small rockets inside me, and I can feel two of them getting ready to move. Neither one of you could have done what I do. I was built to absorb whole suns if necessary, break them down, freeze them down, change their molecular structure and shoot their vitality off in one big useless blast on the radio spectrum. You couldn't do anything like that, Samm, even if you do have arms and legs and a head and a voice — if we ever get into an atmosphere for you to use it in. You couldn't do what I have just done, Folly."

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"You're *good*," said Folly, with emphasis. But she added: "I can repair *you*."

Obviously offended, Finsternis withdrew into his silence.

Samm said to Folly, "How much further to destination?"

Said Folly promptly, "Seventy-nine earth years, four months and three days, six hours and two minutes, but you know how little that means out here. It could seem like a single afternoon or it could feel to us like a thousand lifetimes. Time doesn't work very well for us."

"How did Earth ever find this place, anyhow?" said Samm.

"All I know is that it was two very strong telepaths, working together on the planet Mizzer. An ex-dictator named Casher O'Neill and an ex-Lady named Celalta. They were doing a bit of psionic astronomy and suddenly this signal came in strong and clear. You know that telepaths can catch directions very accurately. Even over immense distances. And they can get emotions, too. But they are not very good at actual images or things. Somebody else checked it out for them."

"M-m-m," said Samm. He had heard all this before. Out of sheer boredom, he went back to swimming vigorously. The body might not really be his, but it made him feel good to exercise it.

Besides, he knew that Folly watched him with pleasure — great pleasure, and a little bit of envy.

Casher O'Neill and the Lady Celalta had finished with making love.

They had lain with their bodies tired and their minds clear, relaxed. They had stretched out on a blanket just above the big gushing spring which was the source of the Ninth Nile. Both telepaths, they could hear a bird-couple quarreling inside a tree, the male bird commanding the female to get out and get to work and the female answering by dropping deeper and deeper into a fretful and irritable sleep.

The Lady Celalta had whispered a thought to her lover and master, Casher O'Neill.

"To the stars?"

"The stars?" thought he with a grumble. They were both strong telepaths. He had been imprinted, in some mysterious way, with the greatest telepath-hypnotist of all time, the Honorable Agatha Madigan, who had gone down in history as the Hechizera of Gonfalon, the only person in history to hypnotize the men and robots of a battle fleet so that it destroyed itself in open space. Casher O'Neill had also retained dim memories of a half-grown girl, incredibly lovely in a simple blue dress, lost to him somewhere be-

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yond amnesiac stars, but in the Lady Celalta he had a companion worthy of his final talents, a natural telepath who could herself reach not only all of Mizzer but some of the nearer stars. When they teamed up together, as she now proposed, they could plunge into dusty infinities of depth and bring back feelings or images which no Go-Captain had ever found with his ship.

He sat up with a grunt of assent.

She looked at him fondly, possessively, her dark eyes alight with alertness, happiness, possessiveness and adventure.

"Can I lift?" she asked, almost timidly.

When two telepaths worked together, one cleared the vision for both of them as far as their combinded minds could reach and then the other sprang, with enormous effort as far and as fast as possible toward any target which presented itself. They had found strange things, sometimes beautiful or dramatic ones, by this method.

Casher was already drinking enormous gulps of air, filling his lungs, holding his breath, letting go with a gasp, and then inhaling deeply and slowly again. In this way he reoxygenated his brain very thoroughly for the huge effort of a telepathic dive into the remote depth of space. He did not even speak to her, nor did he telepath a word to her; he was conserving his strength for a good jump.

He merely nodded to her.

The Lady Celalta, too, began the deep breathing, but she seemed to need it less than did Casher.

They were both sitting up, side by side, breathing deeply.

The cool night sands of Mizzer were around them, the harmless gurgle of the Ninth Nile beside them, the bright star-cluttered sky of Mizzer was above them.

Her hand reached out and took hold of his.

She squeezed his hand. He looked at her and nodded to her again.

Within his mind, Mizzer and its entire solar system seemed to burst into flame with a new kind of light. The radiance of Celalta's mind trailed off unevenly in different directions but there, almost 2° off the pole of Mizzer's ecliptic, he felt something wild and strange, a kind of being which he had never sensed before. Using Celalta's mind as a base, he let his mind dive for it.

The distance of the plunge left them both dizzy, sitting on the quiet night sands of Mizzer. It seemed to both of them that the mind of man had never reached so far before.

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The reality of the phenomenon was undoubtable.

There were animals all around them, the usual categories: runners, hunters, jumpers, climbers, swimmers, hiders and handlers. It was some of the handlers who were intensely telepathic themselves.

The image of man created an immediate, murderous response:

"Cackle gabble, gabble cackle, man, man, man, eat them, eat them!"

Casher and Celalta were both so surprised that they let the contact go, after making sure that they had touched a whole world full of beings, some of them telepathic and probably civilized.

How had the beings known "man"? Why had their response been immediate? Why anthropophagous and homicidal?

They took time, before coming completely out of the trance, to make a careful, exact note of the direction from which the danger-brains had shrieked their warning.

This they submitted to the Instrumentality, shortly after the incident.

And that was how, unknown to Folly, Samm and Finsternis, the inhabitants on the third planet of Linschoten XV had come to the attention of mankind.

IV

As a matter of fact, the three wanderers later on felt a vague, remote telepathic contact which they sensed as being warmhearted and human, and therefore did not try to track down, with their minds or their weapons. It was O'Neill and Celalta, many years later by Mizzer time, reaching to see what the Instrumentality had done about Linschoten XV.

Folly, Samm and Finsternis had no suspicion that the two most powerful telepaths in the human area of the galaxy had stroked them, searched them, felt them through, and seen things about them which the three of them did not know about themselves or about each other.

Casher O'Neill said to the Lady Celalta:

"You got it, too?"

"A beautiful woman, encased in a little ship?"

Casher nodded: "A red-head with skin as soft and transparent as living ivory? A woman who was beautiful and will be beautiful again?"

"That's what I got," said the Lady Celalta. "And the tired old man, weary of his children and weary of his own life because his children were weary of him."

"Not so old," said Casher O'Neill. "And isn't that a spec-

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tacular piece of machinery they put him into? A metal giant. It felt like something about a quarter of a kilometer high. Acid-proof. Cold-proof. Won't he be surprised when he finds that the Instrumentality has rejuvenated his own body inside that monster?"

"He certainly will be," said the Lady Celalta happily, thinking of the pleasant surprise which lay ahead of a man whom she would never know or see with her own bodily eyes.

They both fell silent.

Then said the Lady Celalta, "But the third person . . ." There was a shiver in her voice as though she dared not ask the question. "The third person, the one in the cube." She stopped, as though she could neither ask nor say more.

"It was not a robot or a personality cube," said Casher O'Neill. "It was a human being all right. But it's crazy. Could you make out, Celalta, as to whether it was male or female?"

"No," said she, "I couldn't tell. The other two seemed to think that it was male."

"But did *you* feel sure?" asked Casher.

"With that being, I felt sure of nothing. It was human, all right, but it was stranger than any lost hominid we have ever felt around the forgotten stars. Could you

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tell, Casher, whether it was young or old?"

"No," said he. "I felt nothing—only a desperate human mind with all its guards up, living only because of the terrible powers of the black cube, the sun-killer in which it rode. I never sensed someone before who was a person without characteristics. It's frightening."

"The Instrumentality are cruel sometimes," said Celalta.

"Sometimes they have to be," Casher agreed.

"But I never thought that they would do that."

"Do what?" asked Casher.

Her dark eyes looked at him. It was a different night, and a different Nile, but the eyes were only a very little bit older and they loved him just as much as ever. The Lady Celalta trembled as though she herself might think that the all-powerful Instrumentality could have hidden a microphone in the random sands. She whispered to her lover, her master:

"You said it yourself, Casher, just a moment ago."

"Said what?" He spoke tenderly but fearlessly, his voice ringing out over the cool night sands.

The Lady Celalta went on whispering, which was very unlike her usual self: "You said that the third person was 'crazy.' Do you realize that you may have spoken the actual literal truth?" Her whisper darted at him like a snake.

At last, he whispered back: "What did you sense? What could you guess?"

"They have sent a madman to the stars. Or a mad woman. A real psychotic."

"Lots of pilots," said Casher, speaking more normally, "are cushioned against loneliness with real but artificially activated psychoses. It gets them through the real or imagined horrors of the sufferings of space."

"I don't mean that," said Celalta, still whispering urgently and secretly. "I mean a real psychotic."

"But there aren't any. Not loose, that is," said Casher, stammering with surprise at last. "They either get cured or they are bottled up in thought-proof satellites somewhere."

Celalta raised her voice a little, just a little, so that she no longer whispered but spoke urgently.

"But don't you see, that's what they *must* have done. The Instrumentality made a star-killer too strong for any normal mind to guide. So the Lords got a psychotic somewhere, a real psychotic, and sent a madman out among the stars. Otherwise we could have felt its gender or its age."

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Casher nodded in silent agreement. The air did not feel colder, but he got gooseflesh sitting beside his beloved Celalta on the familiar desert sands.

"You're right. You must be right. It almost makes me feel sorry for the enemies out near Linschoten Fifteen. Do you see nothing of them this time? I couldn't perceive them at all."

"I did, a little," said the Lady Celalta. "Their telepaths have caught the strange minds coming at them with a high rate of speed. The telepathic ones are wild with excitement but the others are just going cackle-gabble, cackle-gabble with each other, filled with anger, hunger and the thought of man."

"You got that much?" he said in wonder.

"My lord and my lover, I dived this time. Is it so strange that I sensed more than you did? Your strength lifted me."

"Did you hear what the weapons called each other?"

"Something silly." He could see her knitting her brows in the bright starshine which illuminated the desert almost the way that the Old Original Moon lit up the nights sometimes on Manhome Itself. "It was Folly, and something like 'Superordinated Alien Measuring and Mastery machine' and something like 'darkness' in the Ancient Doyches Language."

"That's what I got, too," said Casher. "It sounds like a weird team."

"But a powerful one, a terribly powerful one," said the Lady Celalta. "You and I, my lover and master, have seen strange things and dangers between the stars, even before we met each other, but we never saw anything like this before, did we?"

"No," said he.

"Well, then," said she, "let us sleep and forget the matter as much as we can. The Instrumentality is certainly taking care of Linschoten Fifteen, and we two not need bother about it."

And all that Samm, Folly and Finsternis knew was that a light touch, unexplained but friendly, had gone over them from the far star region near home. Thought they, if they thought anything about it at all, "The Instrumentality, which made us and sent us, has checked up on us one more time."

V

A few years later, Samm and Folly were talking again while Finsternis — guarded, impenetrable, uncommunicating, detectable only by the fierce glow of human life which shone telepathically out of the immense cube — rode space beside them and said nothing.

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Suddenly Folly cried out to Samm loudly:

"I can *smell* them."

"Smell who?" asked Samm mildly. "There isn't any smell out here in the nothingness of space."

"Silly," thought Folly back, "I don't mean really smell. I mean that I can pick up *their* sense of odor telepathically."

"Whose?" said Samm, being dense.

"Our enemies', of course," cried Folly. "The man-rememberers who are not man. The cackle-gabble creatures. The beings who remember man and hate him. They smell thick and warm and alive to each other. Their whole world is full of smells. Their telepaths are getting frantic now. They have even figured out that there are three of us and they are trying to get our smells."

"And we have no smell. Not when we do not even know whether we have human bodies or not, inside these things. Imagine this metal body of mine smelling. If it did have a smell," said Samm, "it would probably be the very soft smell of working steel and a little bit of lubricants, plus whatever odors my jets might activate inside an atmosphere. If I know the Instrumentality, they have made my jets smell awful to almost any kind of being. Most forms of life think first through their noses and then figure out the rest of experience later. After all, I was built to intimidate, to frighten, to destroy. The Instrumentality did not make this giant to be friendly with anybody. You and I can be friends, Folly, because you are a little ship which I could hold like a cigar between my fingers, and because the ship holds the memory of a very lovely woman. I can sense what you once were. What you may still be, if your actual body is still inside that boat."

"Oh, Samm!" she cried. "Do you think I might still be alive, really alive, with a real me in a real me, and a chance to be myself somewhere again, out here between the stars?"

"I can't sense it plainly," said Samm. "I've reached as much as I can through your ship with my sensors, but I can't tell whether there's a whole woman there or not. It might be just a memory of you dissected and laminated between a lot of plastic sheets. I really can't tell, but sometimes I have the strangest hunch that you are still alive, in the old ordinary way, and that I am alive too."

"Wouldn't that be wonderful!" She almost shouted at him. "Samm, imagine being us again, if we fulfill our mission and con-

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quer this planet and stay alive and settle there! I might even meet you and —"

They both fell silent at the implications of being ordinary-alive again. They knew that they loved each other. Out here, in the immense blackness of space, there was nothing they could do but streak along in their fast trajectories and talk to each other a little bit by telepathy.

"Samm," said Folly, and the tone of her thought showed that she was changing a difficult subject. "Do you think that we are the furthest out that people have ever gone? You used to be a technician. You might know. Do you?"

"Of course I know," thought Samm promptly. "We're not. After all, we're still deep inside our own galaxy."

"I didn't know," said Folly contritely.

"With all those instruments, don't you know where you are?"

"Of course I know where I am, Samm. In relation to the third planet of Linschoten XV. I even have a faint idea of the general direction in which Old Earth must lie, and how many thousands of ages it would take us to get home, travelling through ordinary space, if we did try to turn around." She thought to herself but didn't add in her thought to Samm, "Which we can't." She thought again to him, "But I've never studied astronomy or navigation, so I couldn't tell whether we were at the edge of the galaxy or not."

"Nowhere near the edge," said Samm. "We're not John Joy Tree and we're nowhere near the two-headed elephants which weep forever in intergalactic space."

"John Joy Tree?" sang Folly; there was joy and memory in her thoughts as she sounded the name. "He was my idol when I was a girl. My father was a subchief of the Instrumentality and always promised to bring John Joy Tree to our house. We had a country and it was unusual and very fine for this day and age. But mister and Go-Captain Tree never got around to visiting us, so there I was, a big girl with picture-cubes of him all over my room. I liked him because he was so much older than me, and so resolute-looking and so tender too. I had all sorts of romantic day-dreams about him, but he never showed up and I married the wrong man several times, and my children got given to the wrong people, so here I am. But what's this stuff about two-headed elephants?"

"Really?" said Samm. "I don't see how you could hear about John Joy Tree and not know what he did."

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"I knew he flew far, far out, but I didn't know exactly what he did. After all, I was just a child when I fell in love with his picture. What *did* he do? He's dead now, I suppose, so I don't suppose it matters."

Finsternis cut in, grimly and unexpectedly: "John Joy Tree is not dead. He's creeping around a monstrous place on an abandoned planet, and he is immortal and insane."

"How did you know that?" cried Samm, turning his enormous metal head to look at the dark burnished cube which had said nothing for so many years.

There was no further thought from Finsternis, not a ghost, not an echo of a word.

Folly prodded him:

"It's no use trying to make that thing talk if it doesn't want to. We've both tried, thousands of times. Tell me about the two-headed elephants. Those are the big animals with large floppy ears and the noses that pick things up, aren't they? And they make very wise, dependable under-people out of them?"

"I don't know about the under-people part, but the animals are the kind you mention, very big indeed. When John Joy Tree got far outside our cosmos by flying through space he found an enormous procession of open ships flying in columns where there was nothing at all. The ships were made by nothing which man has ever even seen. We still don't know where they came from or what made them. Each open ship had a sort of animal, something like an elephant with four front legs and a head at each end, and as he passed the unimaginable ships, these animals howled at him. Howled grief and mourning. Our best guess was that the ships were the tombs of some great race of beings and the howling elephants the immortal half-living mourners who guarded them."

"But how did John Joy Tree ever get back?"

"Ah, that was beautiful. If you go into space$_3$, you take nothing more than your own body with you. That was the finest engineering the human race has ever done. They designed and built a whole planoform ship out of John Joy Tree's skin, fingernails and hair. They had to change his body chemistry a bit to get enough metal in him to carry the coils and the electric circuits, but it worked. He came back. That was a man who could skip through space like a little boy hopping on familiar rocks. He's the only pilot who ever piloted himself back home from outside our galaxy. I don't know whether it will be worth the time and treasure to use space$_3$ for intergalactic trips.

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After all, some very gifted people may have already fallen through by accident, Folly. You and Finsternis and I are people who have been built into machines. We are now ourselves the machines. But with Tree they did it the other way around. They made a machine out of *him*. And it worked. In that one deep flight he went billions of times further than we will ever go."

"You think you know," said Finsternis unexpectedly. "You think you know. That's what you always do. You think you know."

Folly and Samm tried to get Finsternis to talk some more, but nothing happened. After a few more rests and talks they were ready for landing on the third planet of Linschoten XV.

They landed.

They fought.

Blood ran on the ground. Fire scorched the valleys and boiled the lakes. The telepathic world was full of the cackle-gabble of fright, hatred throwing itself into suicide, fury turning into surrender, into deep despair, into hopelessless, and at last into a strange kind of quiet and love.

Let us not tell that story.

It can be written some other time, told by some other voice.

The beings died by thousands and tens of thousands while Finsternis sat on a mountain-top, doing nothing. Folly wove death and destruction, uncoded languages, drew maps, showed Samm the strong-points and the weapons which had to be destroyed. Part of the technology was very advanced, other parts were still tribal. The dominant race was that of the beings who had evolved into handlers and thinkers; it was they who were the telepaths.

All hatred ceased as the haters died.

Only the submissive ones lived on.

Samm tore cities about with his bare metal hands, ripped heavy guns to pieces while they were firing at him, picking the gunners off the gun carriages as though they were lice, swimming oceans when he had to, with Folly darting and hovering around or ahead of him.

Final surrender was brought by their strongest telepath, a very wise old male who had been hidden inside a deep mountain:

"You have come, people. We surrender. Some of us have always known the truth. We are Earth-born, too. A cargo of chickens settled here unimaginable times ago. A time-twist tore us out of our convoy and threw us here. That's way, when we sensed you far across space, we caught the relationship of eat-and-eaten. Only, our brave ones had it

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wrong. You eat us: we don't eat you. You are the masters now. We will serve you forever. Do you seek our death?"

"No, no," said Folly. "We came only to avert a danger, and we have done that. Live on, and on, but plan no war and make no weapons. Leave that to the Instrumentality."

"Blessed is the Instrumentality, whoever that may be. We accept your terms. We belong to you."

When this was done, the war was over.

Strange things began to happen.

Wild voices sang from within Folly and Samm, voices not their own:

Mission gone. Work finished. Go to hill with cube. Go and rejoice!

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Samm and Folly hesitated. They had left Finsternis where they landed, halfway around the planet.

The singing voices became more urgent:

Go. Go. Go now. Go back to the cube. Tell the chicken-people to plant a lawn and a grove of trees. Go, go, go now to the good reward!

They told the telepaths what had been said to them and voyaged wearily up out of the atmosphere and back down for a landing at the original point of contact, a long low hill which had been planted with huge patches of green turf and freshly transplanted trees even in the hours in which they flew off the world and back on it again. The bird-telepaths must have had strong and quick commands.

The singing became pure music as they landed, chorales of reward and rejoicing, with the hint of martial marches and victory fugues woven in.

Alan, stand up, said the voices to Samm.

Samm stood on the ridge of the hill. He stood like a colossus against the red-dawning sky. A friendly, quiet crowd of the chicken-people fell back.

Alan, put your hand to your right forehead, sang the voices.

Samm obeyed. He did not know why the voices called him "Alan."

Ellen, land, sang the rejoicing voices to Folly. Folly, herself a little ship, landed at Samm's feet. She was bewildered with happy confusion and a great deal of pain which did not seem to matter much.

Alan, come forth, sang the voices. Samm felt a sharp pain as his forehead — his huge metal forehead, two hundred meters above the ground — burst open and closed again. There was something pink and helpless in his hand.

The voices commanded, *Alan, put your hand gently on the ground.*

Samm obeyed and put his hand on the ground. The little pink toy fell on the fresh turf. It was a tiny miniature of a man.

Ellen, stand forth, sang the voices again. The ship named Folly opened a door and a naked young woman fell out.

Alma, wake up. The cube named Finsternis turned darker than charcoal. Out of the dark side, there stumbled a black-haired girl. She ran across the hill-slope to the figure named Ellen. The man-body named Alan was struggling to his feet.

The three of them stood up.

The voices spoke to them: "This is our last message. You have done your work. You are well. The boat named Folly con-

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tains tools, medicine and the other equipment for a human colony. The giant named Samm will stand forever as a monument to human victory. The cube named Finsternis will now dissolve. Alan! Ellen! Treat Alma lovingly and well. She is now a forgetty."

The three naked people stood bewildered in the dawn.

"Good-by and a great high thanks from the Instrumentality. This is a pre-coded message, effective only if you won. You have won. Be happy. Live on!"

Ellen took Alma — who had been Finsternis — and held her tight. The great cube dissolved into a shapeless slag-heap. Alan, who had been Samm, looked up at his former body dominating the skyline.

For reasons which the travelers did not understand until many years had passed, the bird-people around them broke into ululant hymns of peace, welcome and joy.

"My house," said Ellen, pointing at the little ship which had spat forth her body just minutes ago, "is now a home for all of us."

They climbed into the successful little ship which had been called Folly. They knew, somehow, that they would find clothes and food. And wisdom, too. They did.

VI

Ten years later, they had the proof of happiness playing in the yard before their house — a substantial building, made of stone and brick, which the local people had built under Alan's directions. (They had changed their whole technology in the process of learning from him, and — thanks to the efficiency and power of the telepathic priestly caste — things learned at any one spot on the planet were swiftly disseminated to the whole group of races on the planet.) The proof of happiness consisted of the thirty-five human children playing in the yard. Ellen had had nine, four sets of twins and a single. Alma had had twelve, two sets of quintuplets and a pair of twins. The other fourteen had been bottle-grown from ova and sperm which they found in the ship, the frozen donations of complete strangers who had done their bit for the offworld settling of the human race. Thanks to the careful genetic coding of both the womb-children and the bottle-children, there was a variety of types, suitable for natural breeding over many generations to come.

Alan came to the door. He measured the time by the place where the great shadow fell. It was hard to realize that the gigan-

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tic, indestructible statue which loomed above them all had once been his own self. A small glacier was beginning to form around the feet of Samm and the night was getting cold.

"I'm bringing the children in already," said Ch-tikkik, one of the local nurses they had hired to help with the huge brood of human babies. She, in return, got the privilege of hatching her eggs on the warm shelf behind the electric stove; she turned them every hour, eagerly awaiting the time that sharp little mouths would break the shell and human-like little hands would tear an opening from which a human-like baby would emerge, oddly-pretty-ugly like a gnome, and unusual only in that it could stand upright from the moment of birth.

One little boy was arguing with Ch-tikkik. He wore a warm robe of vegetable-fiber veins knitted to serve as a base for a feather cloak. He was pointing out that with such a robe he could survive a blizzard and claiming, quite justly, that he did not have to be in the house in order to stay warm. Was that Rupert? thought Alan.

He was about to call the child when his two wives came to the door, arm in arm, flushed with the heat of the kitchen where they had been cooking the two dinners together — one dinner for the human, now numbering thirty-seven, and the other for the bird-people, who were tremendously appreciative of getting cooked food, but who had odd requirements in the recipes, such as "one quart of finely ground granite gravel to each gallon of oatmeal, sugared to taste and served with soybean milk."

Alan stood behind his wives and put a hand on the shoulder of each.

"It's hard to think," he said, "that a little over ten years ago, we didn't even know that we were still people. Now look at us, a family, and a good one."

Alma turned her face up to be kissed, and Ellen, who was less sentimental, lifted her face to be kissed too, so that her co-wife would not be embarrassed at being babied separately. The two liked each other very much. Alma came out of the cube Finisternis as a forgetty, conditioned to remember nothing of her long sad psychotic life before the Instrumentality had sent her on a wild mission among the stars. When she had joined Alan and Ellen, she knew the words of the Old Common Tongue, but very little else.

Ellen had had some time to teach her, to love her and to mother her before any of the babies were born, and the rela-

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tionship between the two of them was warm and good.

The three parents stood aside as the bird-women, wearing their comfortable and pretty feather cloaks, herded the children into the house. The smallest children had already been brought in from their sunning and were being given their bottles by bird-girls who never got tired of watching the cuteness and helplessness of the human infant.

"It's hard to think of that time at all," said Ellen, who had been "Folly." "I wanted beauty and fame and a perfect marriage and nobody even told me that they just didn't go together. I have had to come to the end of the stars to get what I wanted, to be what I might become."

"And me," said Alma, who had been "Finsternis," "I had a worse problem. I was crazy. I was afraid of life. I didn't know how to be a person. I didn't even know how to be a woman, a sweetheart, a female, a mother. How could I ever guess that I needed a sister and wife, like the one you have been, to make my life whole? Without you to show me, Ellen, I could never have married our husband. I thought I was carrying murder among the stars, but I was carrying my own solution as well. Where else could I turn out to be me?"

"And I," said Alan, who had been "Samm," "became a metal giant between the stars because my first wife was dead and my own children forgot me and neglected me. Nobody can say I'm not a father now. Thirty-five, and more than half of them mine. I'll be more of a father than any other man of the human race has ever been."

There was a change in the shadow as the enormous right arm swung quietly but heavily toward the sky as a prelude to the sharp robotic call that nightfall, calculated with astronomical precision, had indeed come to the place where he stood.

The arm reached its height, pointing straight up.

"*I* used to do that," said Alan.

The cry came, something like a silent pistol-shot which all of them heard, but a shot without echoes, without reverberations.

Alan looked around. "All the children are in. Even Rupert. Come in, my darlings, and let us have dinner together." Alma and Ellen went ahead of him and he barred the heavy doors behind them.

This was peace and happiness; that at last was goodness. They had no obligation but to live and to be happy. The threat and the promise of victory were far, far behind.

—CORDWAINER SMITH

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SMALL DEER

by CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

Something killed the dinosaurs.
And where's that Something now?

Willow Bend, Wisconsin
June 23, 1966

Dr. Wyman Jackson,
Wyalusing College,
Muscoda, Wisconsin

My dear Dr. Jackson:

I am writing to you because I don't know who else to write to and there is something I have to tell someone who can understand. I know your name because I read your book, "Cretaceous Dinosaurs," not once, but many times. I tried to get Dennis to read it, too, but I guess he never did. All Dennis ever was interested in were the mathematics of his time concept — not the time machine itself. Besides, Dennis doesn't read too well. It is a chore for him.

Maybe I should tell you, to start with, that my name is Alton James. I live with my widowed mother and I run a fix-it shop. I fix bicycles and lawn mowers and radios and television sets—I fix anything that is brought in to me. I'm not much good at anything else, but I do seem to have the knack of seeing how things go together and understanding how they work and seeing what is wrong with them when they aren't working. I never had no training of any sort, but I just seem to have a natural bent for getting along with mechanical contraptions.

Dennis is my friend and I'll

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admit right off that he is a strange one. He doesn't know from nothing about anything, but he's nuts on mathematics. People in town make fun of him because he is so strange and Ma gives me hell at times for having anything to do with him. She says he's the next best thing to a village idiot. I guess a lot of people think the way that Ma does, but it's not entirely true, for he does know his math.

I don't know how he knows it. He didn't learn it at school and that's for sure. When he got to be 17 and hadn't got no farther than eighth grade, the school just sort of dropped him. He didn't really get to eighth grade honest; the teachers after a while got tired of seeing him on one grade and passed him to the next. There was talk, off and on, of sending him to some special school, but it never got nowhere.

And don't ask me what kind of mathematics he knew. I tried to read up on math once because I had the feeling, after seeing some of the funny marks that Dennis put on paper, that maybe he knew more about it than anyone else in the world. And I still think that he does — or that maybe he's invented an entirely new kind of math. For in the books I looked through I never did find any of the symbols that Dennis put on paper. Maybe Dennis used symbols he made up, inventing them as he went along, because no one had ever told him what the regular mathematicians used. But I don't think that's it—I'm inclined to lean to the idea Dennis came up with a new brand of math, entirely.

There were times I tried to talk with Dennis about this math of his and each time he was surprised that I didn't know it, too. I guess he thought most people knew about it. He said that it was simple, that it was plain as day. It was the way things worked, he said.

I suppose you'll want to ask how come I understood his equations well enough to make the time machine. The answer is I didn't. I suppose that Dennis and I are alike in a lot of ways, but in different ways. I know how to make contraptions work (without knowing any of the theory) and Dennis sees the entire universe as something operating mathematically (and him scarcely able to read a page of simple type.)

And another thing. My family and Dennis' family live in the same end of town and from the time we were toddlers, Dennis and I played together. Later on, we just kept on together. We didn't have a choice. For some reason or other, none of the kids would play with us. Unless we

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wanted to play alone, we had to play together. I guess we got so, through the years, that we understood each other.

I don't suppose there'd been any time machine if I hadn't been so interested in paleontology. Not that I knew anything about it; I was just interested. From the time I was a kid I read everything I could lay my hands on about dinosaurs and saber-tooths and such. Later on I went fossil hunting in the hills, but I never found nothing really big. Mostly I found brachiopods. There are great beds of them in the Platteville limestone. And lots of times I'd stand in the street and look up at the river bluffs above the town and try to imagine what it had been like a million years ago, or a hundred million. When I first read in a story about a time machine, I remember thinking how I'd like to have one. I guess that at one time I thought a little about making one, but then realized I couldn't.

Dennis had a habit of coming to my shop and talking, but most of the time talking to himself rather than to me. I don't remember exactly how it started, but after a while I realized that he had stopped talking about anything but time. One day he told me he had been able to figure out everything but time, and now it seemed he was getting that down in black and white, like all the rest of it.

Mostly I didn't pay too much attention to what he said, for a lot of it didn't make much sense. But after he'd talked, incessantly, for a week or two, on time, I began to pay attention. But don't expect me to tell you what he said or make any sense of it, for there's no way that I can. To understand what Dennis said and meant, you'd have to live with him, like I did, for twenty years or more. It's not so much understanding what Dennis says as understanding Dennis.

I don't think we actually made any real decision to build a time machine. It just sort of grew on us. All at once we found that we were making one.

We took our time. We had to take our time, for we went back a lot and did things over, almost from the start. It took weeks to get some of the proper effects — at least, that's what Dennis called them. Me, I didn't know anything about effects. All that I knew was that Dennis wanted to make something work a certain way and I tried to make it work that way Sometimes, even when it worked the way he wanted it, it turned out to be wrong. So we'd start all over.

But finally we had a working

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model of it and took it out on a big bald bluff, several miles up the river, where no one ever went. I rigged up a timer to a switch that would turn it on, then after two minutes would reverse the field and send it home again.

We mounted a movie camera inside the frame that carried the machine, and we set the camera going, then threw the timer switch.

I had my doubts that it would work, but it did. It went away and stayed for two minutes, then came back again.

When we developed the camera film, we knew without any question the camera had traveled back in time. At first there were pictures of ourselves, standing there and waiting. Then there was a little blur, no more than a flicker, across a half a dozen frames, and the next frames showed a mastodon walking straight into the camera. A fraction of a second later his trunk jerked up and his ears flared out as he wheeled around with clumsy haste and galloped down the ridge.

Every now and then he'd swing his head around to take a look behind him. I imagine that our time machine, blossoming suddenly out of the ground in front of him, scared him out of seven years of growth.

We were lucky, that was all. We could have sent that camera back another thousand times, perhaps, and never caught a mastodon — probably never caught a thing. Although we would have known it had moved in time, for the landscape had been different, although not a great deal different. But from the landscape we could not have told if it had gone back in time a hundred or a thousand years. When we saw the mastodon, however, we knew we'd sent the camera back 10,000 years at least.

I won't bore you with how we worked out a lot of problems on our second model, or how Dennis managed to work out a time-meter that we could calibrate to send the machine a specific distance into time. Because all this is not important. What is important is what I found when I went into time.

I've already told you I'd read your book about Cretaceous dinosaurs and I liked the entire book, but that final chapter about the extinction of the dinosaurs is the one that really got me. Many a time I'd lie awake at night thinking about all the theories you wrote about and trying to figure out in my own mind how it really was.

So when it was time to get into that machine and go, I knew where I would be headed.

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Dennis gave me no argument. He didn't even want to go. He didn't care no more. He never was really interested in the time machine. All he wanted was to prove out his math. Once the machine did that, he was through with it.

I worried a lot, going as far as I meant to go, about the rising or subsidence of the crust. I knew that the land around Willow Bend had been stable for millions of years. Sometime during the Cretaceous a sea had crept into the interior of the continent, but had stopped short of Wisconsin and, so far as geologists could determine, there had been no disturbances in the state. But I still felt uneasy about it. I didn't want to come out into the Late Cretaceous with the machine buried under a dozen feet of rock or, maybe, hanging a dozen feet up in the air.

So I got some heavy steel pipes and sunk them six feet into the rock on the bald bluff top we had used that first time, with about ten feet of their length extending in the air. I mounted the time frame on top of them and rigged up a ladder to get in and out of it and tied the pipes into the time field.

One morning I packed a lunch and filled a canteen with water. I dug the old binoculars that had been my father's out of the attic and debated whether I should take along a gun. All I had was a shotgun and I decided not to take it. If I'd had a rifle, there'd been no question of my taking it, but I didn't have one. I could have borrowed one, but I didn't want to. I'd kept pretty quiet about what I was doing and I didn't want to start any gossip in the village.

I went up to the bluff top and climbed up to the frame and set the time-meter for 63½ million years into the past and then I turned her on. I didn't make any ceremony out of it. I just turned her on and went.

I told you about the little blur in the movie film and that's the best way, I suppose, to tell you how it was. There was this little blur, like a flickering twilight. Then it was sunlight once again and I was on the bluff top, looking out across the valley.

Except it wasn't a bluff top any longer, but only a high hill. And the valley was not the rugged, tree-choked, deeply cut valley I had always known, but a great green plain, a wide and shallow valley with a wide and sluggish river flowing at the far side of it. Far to the west I could see a shimmer in the sunlight, a large lake or sea. But a sea, I thought, shouldn't be this far east. But there it was, either

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a great lake or a sea — I never did determine which.

And there was something else as well. I looked down to the ground and it was only three feet under me. Was I ever glad I had used those pipes!

Looking out across the valley, I could see some moving things, but they were so far away that I could not make them out. So I picked up the binoculars and jumped down to the ground and walked across the hilltop until the ground began to slope away.

I sat down and put the binoculars to my eyes and worked across the valley with them.

There were dinosaurs out there, a whole lot more of them than I had expected. They were in herds and they were traveling. You'd expect that out of any dozen herds of them, some of them would be feeding, but none of them was. All of them were moving and it seemed to me there was a nervousness in the way they moved. Although, I told myself, that might be the way it was with dinosaurs.

They all were a long way off, even with the glasses, but I could make out some of them. There were several groups of duckbills, waddling along and making funny jerky movements with their heads. I spotted a couple of small herds of thescelosaurs, pacing along, with their bodies tilted forward. Here and there were small groups of triceratops. But strangest of all was a large herd of brontosaurs, ambling nervously and gingerly along, as if their feet might hurt. And it struck me strange, for they were a long ways from water and from what I'd read in your book, and in other books, it didn't seem too likely they ever wandered too far away from water.

And there were a lot of other things that didn't look too much like the pictures I had seen in books.

The whole business had a funny feel about it. Could it be, I wondered, that I had stumbled on some great migration, with all the dinosaurs heading out for some place else?

I got so interested in watching that I was downright careless and it was foolish of me. I was in another world and there could have been all sorts of dangers and I should have been watching out for them, but I was just sitting there, flat upon my backside, as if I were at home.

Suddenly there was a pounding, as if someone had turned loose a piledriver, coming up behind me and coming very fast. I dropped the glasses and twisted around and as I did something big and tall rushed past me, no more than three feet away, so

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close it almost brushed me. I got just a brief impression of it as it went past — huge and gray and scaly.

Then, as it went tearing down the hill, I saw what it was and I had a cold and sinking feeling clear down in my gizzard. For I had been almost run down by the big boy of them all—Tyrannosaurus rex.

His two great legs worked like driving pistons and the light of the sun glinted off the wicked, recurved claws as his feet pumped up and down. His tail rode low and awkward, but there was no awkwardness in the way he moved. His monstrous head swung from side to side, with the great rows of teeth showing in the gaping mouth, and he left behind him a faint foul smell — I suppose from the carrion he ate. But the big surprise was that the wattles hanging underneath his throat were a brilliant iridescence — red and green and gold and purple, the color of them shifting as he swung his head.

I watched him for just a second and then I jumped up and headed for the time machine. I was more scared than I like to think about. I had, I want to testify right here, seen enough of dinosaurs for a lifetime.

But I never reached the time machine.

Up over the brow of the hill came something else. I say something else because I have no idea what it really was. Not as big as rex, but ten times worse than him.

It was long and sinuous and it had a lot of legs and it stood six feet high or so and was a sort of sickish pink. Take a caterpillar and magnify it until it's six feet tall, then give it longer legs so that it can run instead of crawl and hang a death mask dragon's head upon it and you get a faint idea. Just a faint idea.

It saw me and swung its head toward me and made an eager whimpering sound and it slid along toward me with a side-wheeling gait, like a dog when it's running out of balance and lop-sided.

I took one look at it and dug in my heels and made so sharp a turn that I lost my hat. The next thing that I knew, I was pelting down the hill behind old Tyrannosaurus.

And now I saw that myself and rex were not the only things that were running down the hill. Scattered here and there along the hillside were other running creatures, most of them in small groups and herds, although there were some singles. Most of them were dinosaurs, but there were other things as well.

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I'm sorry I can't tell you what they were, but at that particular moment I wasn't what you might call an astute observer. I was running for my life, as if the flames of hell were lapping at my heels.

I looked around a couple of times and that sinuous creature was still behind me. He wasn't gaining on me any, although I had the feeling that he could if he put his mind to it. Matter of fact, he didn't seem to be following me alone. He was doing a lot of weaving back and forth. He reminded me of nothing quite so much as a faithful farm dog bringing in the cattle. But even thinking this, it took me a little time to realize that was exactly what he was — an old farm dog bringing in a bunch of assorted dinosaurs and one misplaced human being.

At the bottom of the hill I looked back again and now that I could see the whole slope of the hill, I saw that this was a bigger cattle drive than I had imagined. The entire hill was alive with running beasts and behind them were a half dozen of the pinkish dogs.

And I knew when I saw this that the moving herds I'd seen out on the valley floor were not migratory herds, but they were moving because they were being driven — that this was a big roundup of some sort, with all the reptiles and the dinosaurs and myself being driven to a common center.

I knew that my life depended on getting lost somehow, and being left behind. I had to find a place to hide and I had to dive into this hiding place without being seen. Only trouble was there seemed no place to hide. The valley floor was naked and nothing bigger than a mouse could have hidden there.

Ahead of me a good-size swale rose up from the level floor and I went pelting up it. I was running out of wind. My breath was getting short and I had pains throbbing in my chest and I knew I couldn't run much farther.

I reached the top of the swale and started down the reverse slope. And there, right in front of me, was a bush of some sort, three feet high or so, bristling with thorns. I was too close to it and going too fast to even try to dodge it, so I did the only thing I could — I jumped over it.

But on the other side there was no solid ground. There was, instead, a hole. I caught just a glimpse of it and tried to jerk my body to one side, and then I was falling in the hole.

It wasn't much bigger than I

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was. It bumped me as I fell and I picked up some bruises, then landed with a jolt. The fall knocked the breath out of me and I was doubled over, with my arms wrapped about my belly.

My breath came slowly back and the pain subsided and I was able to take a look at where I was.

The hole was some three feet in diameter and perhaps as much as seven deep. It slanted slightly toward the forefront of the slope and its sides were worn smooth. A thin trickle of dirt ran down from the edge of it, soil that I had loosened and dislodged when I had hit the hole. And about halfway up was a cluster of small rocks, the largest of them about the size of a human head, projecting more than half their width out of the wall. I thought, idly, as I looked at them, that some day they'd come loose and drop into the hole. And at the thought I squirmed around a little to one side, so that if they took a notion to fall I'd not be in the line of fire.

Looking down, I saw that I'd not fallen to the bottom of the hole, for the hole went on, deeper in the ground. I had come to rest at a point where the hole curved sharply, to angle back beneath the swale top.

I hadn't noticed it at first, I suppose because I had been too shook up, but now I became aware of a musky smell. Not an overpowering odor, but a sort of scent — faintly animal, although not quite animal.

A smooth-sided hole and a musky smell — there could be no other answer: I had fallen not into just an ordinary hole, but into a burrow of some sort. And it must be the burrow of quite an animal, I thought, to be the size it was. It would have taken something with hefty claws, indeed, to have dug this sort of burrow.

And even as I thought it, I heard the rattling and the scrabbling of something coming up the burrow, no doubt coming up to find out what was going on.

I did some scrabbling myself. I didn't waste no time. But about three feet up I slipped. I grabbed for the top of the hole, but my fingers slid through the sandy soil and I couldn't get a grip. I shot out my feet and stopped my slide short of the bottom of the hole. And there I was, with my back against one side of the hole and my feet braced against the other, hanging there, halfway up the burrow.

While all the time below me the scrabbling and the clicking sounds continued. The thing, whatever it might be, was getting closer, and it was coming fast.

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Right in front of me was the nest of rocks sticking from the wall. I reached out and grabbed the biggest one and jerked and it came loose. It was heavier than I had figured it would be and I almost dropped it, but managed to hang on.

A snout came out of the curve in the burrow and thrust itself quickly upward in a grabbing motion. The jaws opened up and they almost filled the burrow and they were filled with sharp and wicked teeth.

I didn't think. I didn't plan. What I did was instinct. I dropped the rock between my spread-out legs straight down into that gaping maw. It was a heavy rock and it dropped four feet or so and went straight between the teeth, down into the blackness of the throat. When it hit it splashed and the paws snapped shut and the creature backed away.

How I did it, I don't know, but I got out of the hole. I clawed and kicked against the wall and heaved my body up and rolled out of the hole onto the naked hillside.

Naked, that is, except for the bush with the inch-long thorns, the one that I'd jumped over before I fell into the burrow. It was the only cover that there was and I made for the upper side of it, for by now, I figured, the big cattle drive had gone past me and if I could get the bush between myself and the valley side of the swale, I might have a chance. Otherwise, sure as hell, one of those dogs would see me and would come out to bring me in.

For a while there was no questions that they were dinosaur herders, they probably couldn't tell the difference between me and a dinosaur. I was alive and could run and that would qualify me.

There was always the chance, of course, that the owner of the burrow would come swarming out, and if he did I couldn't stay behind the bush. But I rather doubted he'd be coming out, not right away, at least. It would take him a while to get that stone out of his throat.

I crouched behind the bush and the sun was hot upon my back and, peering through the branches, I could see, far out on the valley floor, the great herd of milling beasts. All of them had been driven together and there they were, running in a knotted circle, while outside the circle prowled the pinkish dogs and something else as well — what appeared to be men driving tiny cars. The cars and men were all of the same color, a sort of greenish gray, and the two of them, the cars and men, seemed

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to be a single organism. The men didn't seem to be sitting in the cars; they looked as if they grew out of the cars, as if they and the cars were one. And while the cars went zipping along, they appeared to have no wheels. It was hard to tell, but they seemed to travel with the bottom of them flat upon the ground, like a snail would travel, and as they travelled, they rippled, as if the body of the car were some sort of flowing muscle.

I crouched there watching and now, for the first time, I had a chance to think about it, to try to figure out what was going on. I had come here, across more than sixty million years, to see some dinosaurs, and I sure was seeing them, but under what you might say were peculiar circumstances. The dinosaurs fit, all right. They looked mostly like the way they looked in books, but the dogs and car-men were something else again. They were distinctly out of place.

The dogs were pacing back and forth, sliding along in their sinuous fashion, and the car-men were zipping back and forth, and every once in a while one of the beasts would break out of the circle and the minute that it did, a half dozen dogs and a couple of car-men would race to intercept it and drive it back again.

The circle of beasts must have had, roughly, a diameter of a mile or more — a mile of milling, frightened creatures. A lot of paleontologists have wondered whether dinosaurs had any voice and I can tell you that they did. They were squealing and roaring and quacking and there were some of them that hooted — I think it was the duckbills hooting, but I can't be sure.

Then, all at once, there was another sound, a sort of fluttering roar that seemed to be coming from the sky. I looked up quickly and I saw them coming down — a dozen or so spaceships, they couldn't have been anything but spaceships. They came down rather fast and they didn't seem too big and there were tails of thin, blue flame flickering at their bases. Not the billowing clouds of flame and smoke that our rockets have, but just a thin blue flicker.

For a minute it looked like one of them would land on top of me, but then I saw that it was too far out. It missed me, matter of fact, a good two miles or so. It and the others sat down in a ring around the milling herd out in the valley.

I should have known what would happen out there. It was the simplest explanation one could think of and it was logical. I think, maybe, way deep down,

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I did know, but my surface mind had pushed it away because it was too matter-of-fact and too ordinary.

Thin snouts spouted from the ships and purple fire curled mistily at the muzzle of those snouts and the dinosaurs went down in a fighting, frightened, squealing mass. Thin trickles of vapor drifted upward from the snouts and out in the center of the circle lay that heap of dead and dying dinosaurs, all those thousands of dinosaurs piled in death.

It is a simple thing to tell, of course, but it was a terrible thing to see. I crouched there behind the bush, sickened at the sight, startled by the silence when all the screaming and the squealing and the hooting ceased. And shaken, too—not by what shakes me now as I write this letter, but shaken by the knowledge that something from outside could do this to the earth.

For they were from outside. It wasn't just the spaceships, but those pinkish dogs and gray-green car-men which were not cars and men, but a single organism, were not things of earth; could not be things of earth.

I crept back from the bush, keeping low in hope that the bush would screen me from the things down in the valley until I reached the swale top. One of the dogs swung around and looked my way and I froze, and after a time he looked away.

Then I was over the top of the swale and heading back toward the time machine. But half way down the slope, I turned around and came back again, crawling on my belly, squirming to the hilltop to have another look.

It was a look I'll not forget.

The dogs and car-men had swarmed in upon the heap of dead dinosaurs, and some of the cars already were crawling back toward the grounded spaceships, which had let down ramps. The cars were moving slowly, for they were heavily loaded and the loads they carried were neatly butchered hams and racks of ribs.

And in the sky there was a muttering and I looked up to see yet other spaceships coming down — the little transport ships that would carry this cargo of fresh meat up to another larger ship that waited overhead.

It was then I turned and ran.

I reached the top of the hill and piled into the time machine and set it at zero and came home. I didn't even stop to hunt for the binoculars I'd dropped.

And now that I am home, I'm not going back again. I'm not going anywhere in that time machine. I'm afraid of what I might find any place I go. If

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Wyalusing College has any need of it, I'll give them the time machine.

But that's not why I wrote.

There is no doubt in my mind what happened to the dinosaurs, why they became extinct. They were killed off and butchered and hauled away, to some other planet, perhaps many light years distant, by a race which looked upon the earth as a cattle range —a planet that could supply a vast amount of cheap protein.

But that, you say, happened more than sixty million years ago. This race did once exist. But in sixty million years it would almost certainly have changed its ways or drifted off in its hunting to some other sector of the galaxy, or, perhaps, have become extinct, like the dinosaurs.

But I don't think so. I don't think any of those things happened. I think they're still around. I think earth may be only one of many planets which supply their food.

And I'll tell you why I think so. They were back on earth again, I'm sure, some 10,000 or 11,000 years ago, when they killed off the mammoth and the mastodon, the giant bison, the great cave bear and the sabretooth and a lot of other things. Oh, yes, I know they missed Africa. They never touched the big game there. Maybe, after wiping out the dinosaurs, they learned their lesson, and left Africa for breeding stock.

And now I come to the point of this letter, the thing that has me worried.

Today there are just a few less than three billion of us humans in the world. By the year 2,000 there may be as many as six billion of us.

We're pretty small, of course, and these things went in for tonnage, for dinosaurs and mastodon and such. But there are so many of us! Small as we are, we may be getting to the point where we'll be worth their while.

—CLIFFORD D. SIMAK.

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Galaxy Bookshelf

By Algis Budrys

The hardcover science-fiction books of today are of course published by the same people who publish the straight fiction and mysteries and westerns—Doubleday, Simon & Schuster and so forth. This wasn't always so; it didn't begin to be so until about the time, fifteen years ago, when this magazine's first issue began a similarly meaningful revolution on the newsstands. In 1950, the biggest names in sf books—almost the only names—were Arkham House, Fantasy Press, F.P.C.I., Gnome Press, Hadley, Prime Press and Shasta. Some of them were on their way out, but these were isolated infirmities; a commercially foolish editorial policy in one instance, the publisher's personal circumstances in another. As a group they were promising, though they were essentially one-man operations started by people who had scraped together a little capital or credit. In some hope of profit, they were in the business of reprinting what each personally considered the best magazine science fiction published to that date.

What they produced was various. It varied from one company's systematic resurrection of every big name undermined by the new techniques of the 1940s *Astounding,* through Hadley's editions of such interesting but idiosyncratic pieces as L. Ron Hubbard's *Final Blackout,* to Arkham House's beautifully made volumes not only of Howard Phillips Lovecraft but of A. E. van Vogt's *Slan* and Ray Bradbury's first and best collection, *Dark Carnival.*

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They did most of their business by mail order; their ads were column inches in the prozines, mimeographed pages in the fanzines. But in any largish city you could usually find one bookstore which was not above stocking one copy each for the nut trade, and here and there you could find booksellers who boasted that they specialized in it.

1950 was about the time when book review columns became regular features in the prozines. Before that, reviews, like books, had been occasional pieces. They had run as fillers at the bottoms of pages short on story text, and they were often obviously too thrilled at the thought that anything at all had found its way into boards. By 1950, the volume had not only gotten high enough to justify regular columns, it had gotten high enough to justify a nice cathartic bent of expression when a bad one came in, because the bad ones were in hopeless contrast to the good ones.

God grant that such a luxuriant time will never again come to science fiction book publishing. The great board of top-rank material waiting to be put into books was the bittersweet result of persistent neglect. Writers had lived, written and died without ever seeing permanent publication. Most of them were not specially conscious of great deprivation in this area, however — not very many people knew the area existed. It was entirely possible to be a science-fiction fan in 1945 and not realize that there had been a Golden Age just before World War II; it was only when these books began coming out that the shape and nature of that work became fully apparent.

I would not want you to think that I believe some cosmic switch had clicked over in 1939 and then back in 1944. Neither is it true that between these arbitrary dates *Astounding Science Fiction* published seventy-two issues of solid immortal literature while none of its competitors did a thing but move in place. What *Astounding* did do, over a period of years, was to develop and, until 1950, keep writers who fairly often wrote a certain broad type of story well. It was a type of story which was better received by articulate science-fiction readers of those days than was any other type of story; those same readers were now ready to buy those same stories again in book form, and it so happened that a good number of people who had never read that kind of science fiction before were able to share their taste.

The ASF "Golden Age" in science fiction had been slightly an-

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ticipated by a similar phenomenon in crime fiction, with Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, among others, emerging from the crumbled pages of *Black Mask*. Apparently something just before the War acted to create pulp writers who were willing to break out of the post-World War I shell of neverland cliches which persisted in the pulps until the middle of the 1930s. It may have been an echo of the same tough attitude toward life that had produced Hemingway and Steinbeck in the "mainstream" somewhat earlier. Crime stories in the new mode had been getting serious book publishing attention all during World War II. Now it was perhaps science fiction's turn. The material was there. The new publishers picked it up and made books of it.

Fantasy Press went back a little farther, to publish the early E.E. Smith and Stanley Weinbaum as well as other forerunners of "modern" science fiction as these same book publishers now proceeded to define it, creating sharp distinctions from the past, and from Flash Gordon, simply by running full notices of previous publication and thus making it clear where the "good" — the most readable — material had come from. Centering their attention exactly on the Campbellian writers were Gnome Press and Shasta; while Shasta brought out Heinlein's Future History series, for example, Gnome was busy doing Asimov's Foundation stories. Arkham House, *Slan* aside, was meanwhile tending toward selections from such fantasy magazines as *Weird Tales* and *Unknown,* which had had little golden ages of their own and which Fantasy Press's program also included. Prime Press did a little of both, including collections by Lester del Rey (. . .*And Some Were Human*) and Theodore Sturgeon (*Without Sorcery*) which split their sources mainly between *Astounding* and *Unknown,* and by George O. Smith (*Venus Equilateral*) which was without peer as an example of ASF wiring-diagram fiction. Shasta brought out the Don A. Stuart stories (*Who Goes There?, Cloak of Aesir*), and Gnome did Van Vogt's *The Mixed Men* and Henry Kuttner's Gallegher stories (*Robots Have No Tails,* by "Lewis Padgett").

In other words, in the few years between the end of the war and the earliest 1950s, these various people with their varied resources brought out the books which are still the liver and lights of any permanent collection of good science fiction. Random House had issued its legendary Healy-McComas anthology, *Adventures in Time and Space,*

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and Crown had brought out Groff Conklin's *A Treasury of Science Fiction,* but Gnome had countered with Martin Greenberg's *Men Against the Stars,* an entry fully qualified to run in that field.

If it hadn't been for the houses listed in Paragraph One of this necessarily breathless history, grown up science fiction might have taken years to find a permanent place in literature via the library catalogues. With the few exceptions mentioned immediately above, the established major houses hadn't touched anything but Verne and Wells in years, the only significant wartime exceptions being Pocket's original paperback, *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction,* and Viking's *Portable Novels of Science.* Both of these had been edited and one assumes fought into life by Donald Wollheim, who has gone on to do his impressive job of making bricks without straw for Ace paperbacks. He, Healy and McComas, Groff Conklin and a few others might eventually have succeeded by applying unremitting pressure over a long period of time. The little specialist houses, operating out of lofts, book stores and their owners' basements, cut that time dramatically short. They made the 1950s into boom year . . . from which they themselves would draw little but disaster.

By 1951, these people had accomplished two major things, both suicidal. They had exhausted the supply of easily found, high-quality reprints from the magazines, and they had established the financial value of the sf book market. They had gotten to that point because you can succeed with almost any sensible small venture in publishing as long as you're not doing something the potential major competitors want to do as well. At that point, the first Science Fiction Book Club had appeared on the back cover of a prozine. Except for differences of detail, it looked and read exactly like its sister ads for the Detective Book Club, which had been riding the back covers of the crime magazines for years. Merchandising had come to the business of publishing sf books for profit, and the incidence of major company names on new sf titles had begun to rise sharply.

A major publishing house has, by definition, the equipment needed to be a major publisher — a staff of editorial specialists, a production staff which does nothing all day but buy supplies and services having to do with publishing and a sales staff which can consist of hundreds of specialists, some of them out on the road calling on bookstore owners they have known for years and

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others sitting home and writing punchy brochure copy. This is what these people do for a living. They have been trained for it under the impetus of believing that this is all they can do for a living. They are paid to do their one thing at least as well as their opposite numbers at the next major house. With this sort of organization, it is possible to produce a million copies of something that may look and be fractionally better than the work of one busy man working for himself. If you have a hundred such specialists, they can produce, say, ten times as many things to make a million copies of.

Once such a major organization has been put in train, it is committed by the inertia of schedules and capital investment. The sight of a major publishing company winding up to give birth to a new program is so impressive that few of its rivals can restrain themselves from following suit. Once the herd has been set in motion it must, by the nature of the beast, proceed along the line of least resistance for an indefinite period of time, leaving nothing in its wake but a stubble of grasses cropped too short to sustain life.

In the area of wholesale bookselling, the brief contention was thus between the specialists in science fiction and the specialists in publishing. In the area of simple packaging — of producing at a profit a book which appears to be worth the retail customer's money — the contest was only a little longer in the drawing out. It was in fact extended past its natural run by something like a happenstance. The merchandising machinery having gotten turned on, the various sales organizations sponsored by the major publishers immediately needed more product than the publishers themselves were yet able to furnish. So for a little while the small houses were able to supply copies to the book club operations owned more or less by their direct competitors. Thus they acquired a little more money to operate on, at the same time that their choice of production standards was sharply narrowed to the more expensive bands of the book-making spectrum.

What this meant for the retail customers was that more conventional-looking science fiction books in far greater quantities had become available. Shopping for books became considerably more convenient. Book prices were reduced, in several senses; over the short terms, there was the benefit of having the specialist houses throw their stocks on the cut-rate market in an

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effort to get hold of additional working capital or simply to bail out. Over the long term, book prices were reduced (not absolutely, but relative to the still rising cost of production) by the combination of high-volume sales and production economies of which only major publishers are capable.

In fact, the only place the sf book-reading public lost anything tangible at all was one from which the small publishers could not have rescued them, but from which the big publishers could. That was in the paucity of remaining publishable book-length material. The result was that the middle 1950s were bad years for quality, and looked worse by comparison to the immediate past.

The middle 1950s were the years in which we got the "novels" pasted together from series short stories, the "science fiction" by outside writers who had obviously seen a monster movie once and the unfortunate experiments in hapless antiquarianism reminiscent of that pioneering California company which had staked its all on Ralph Milne Farley.

These were the years in which knowledgeable critics lambasted the major companies day and night. If Gnome Press had been able to bring out Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot,* why in Heaven's name couldn't a giant outfit like Doubleday do better than Nelson Bond's Lancelot Biggs series disguised as a novel? Answer, Doubleday wasn't about to do *I, Robot* — yet. Gnome's excellently manufactured edition, with its flossy Cartier jacket making it look exactly like a big-time book, was still very much on sale. Doubleday would of course get to it in the course of time, but meanwhile there was Max Ehrlich's *The Big Eye,* and that was science fiction too. You could tell by the rocket on the title page.

It wasn't all bad. Gnome's *City,* by Clifford Simak, was the outstanding example of a pasteup that had been begging to be done. Doubleday's *The Martian Chronicles* dates from that time — a beautiful Bradbury collection which owes part of its charm to the loose connecting passages between stories, which may be the fragile vestiges of earlier plans to make a novel. Simon & Schuster did take the bit in its teeth and publish an edition of *Slan.* Grossett & Dunlap came out with a mass-priced edition of Henry Kuttner's *Fury.* Frederick Fell, hitherto known as the promulgator of Oscar J. Friend's *The Kid from Mars* — which is not *quite* as bad as its title — began publishing the

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Bleiler-Dikty annual "best" collections of magazine stories, which served the function of providing the cinderblock base for Judith Merril to later build bigger and better for Simon & Schuster and Dell. And Twayne, another small but nevertheless full-scale publisher who hoped to ride up among the majors on the strength of this new boom, did something very interesting with its "Triplet" series, fostered by Fletcher Pratt and Dr. John D. Clark.

These were anthologies of three novellas each by three major sf writers, who were given a loose outline of a basic story problem and a detailed description of the solar system in which it was to occur, each writer then going his own way as he saw fit. This was one attempt to create books. With all the will and budget in the world, the science-fiction magazines of that time could only supply the best of the new gout of wordage the book publishers now needed as they jockeyed for control of the market. They couldn't supply all of it, by a long shot.

Perforce, the book publishers had to be willing to pay enough for original material so that good writers could be induced to occasionally forego the magazines as a primary market

No publisher in the world ever pays more than he has to, but the major publishers have people trained to pay that minimum with checks drawn on impressive banks, and with cheerily mesmerrhetic references to the freemasonry of the arts. In this case the book publishers were not only broadening the primary market for original sf, they were now applying the coup de grace to the little specialists, as well as shaking off the coattail riders in their own ranks.

Twayne was one of the companies which dropped out of the picture. But its program left some significant orphans. Among the ultimate results of Fletcher Pratt's brainchild was James Blish's Hugo-winning *A Case of Conscience*, which ran as a long one-parter in *If* before expanding up to its prize book length. Two other Twayne stories, an Asimov and a Poul Anderson, appeared as serials in *Astounding*. In its own lefthanded way, this was the first major case of important work being fed from a book publisher into the magazines — a complete reversal of the established precedence.

At about this same time, two other interesting things happened.

A publisher of paperback originals got on the stands with his edition of a middling-impor-

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tant novel before it had finished running as a serial in *Astounding*. And Doubleday published Cyril Kornbluth's *Takeoff*, a major novel by a major magazine writer, which had seen no magazine publication at all.

After the inevitable stumbling start, the big book houses were getting their programs into full flight. In every other important field of magazine fiction, most of the long serials had in fact been already under contract as books. That had now become the situation in science fiction, as well, and with various ups and downs, that is the situation today. In all, it took the major houses about five years, from 1950 to 1955, to make it so.

After ten years, this pendulum may now be getting ready to swing back the other way. Too many new (novels) are not former magazine serials — however arrived at — but puffed-up novelettes. Some of them were books all along, cut down for magazine use. But by far the greater percentage are not — they are padded, patched together or published in a design form that makes a lousy forty thousand words stretch across too many pages which are mostly margin and elephantiasical type. They are sometimes written by third-rate writers who are being overpaid in compensation for missing the apprenticeship that magazine work forces on its steady practitioners. These flat souffles are in turn subjected to the attentions of blurb writers and sales promotion directors who describe and package them to be more attractive and rewarding than they really are.

It is my fervent hope that these easy promises will have their effect; that the second or third time the customer is induced to part with four dollars for a two-dollar experience, a certain chill will settle over the romance.

In looking over the titles produced by the pioneers of 1950— not all of whom were honest men with the look of far horizons in their eyes, and some of whom rooked their customers and writers unmercifully, sometimes from sheer naivete — one is struck by how odd a professional production man for, say, Biggers & Better & Sons Co. would find them. He might forgive them for the early "hardcover" book which was bound in limp leather by the only bindery in town and looks exactly like a bible, or for the jobs which were obviously done on flatbed weekly newspaper presses. He might understand that the publishers were limited in their choices of production methods and sources of supply for such things as paper

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and binding cloth. He, a book designer and a professional packet copywriter might have the patience to understand that the publishers of these books had to handle those functions themselves and could not really be faulted for not having as much esthetic sense or writing ability as they had editorial judgment . . . or whatever it was they had. It is after all a truism in big-time publishing that talent is exactly as deep as frosted glass partition. What would puzzle and dismay the production man would be the frequent appearance of expensive interior halftone illustrations — often done in the publisher's best self-taught style — tipped in on expensive enameled stock; the use of opulent text papers, of foundry type, of cut initials, of attempts at full-color reproduction of jacket designs which were often even worse than the interior illustrations.

These were struggling people. They typed their own invoices, wrapped their own product and stood in line at the post office to mail it, walking back to their thirty-dollar-a-month offices with sheafs of stamps sticking out of their shirt pockets. Almost to a man, they thought they could solve problems that have wrecked the careers of professional specialists, and almost to a man they didn't even realize they had failed. They didn't even know, beyond a vague sense of something not quite right, why their books felt harder to read than a similar text composed and designed by a man drawing fifteen grand a year from Biggers & Better — mostly for having on file the phone numbers of all the display type houses in town.

They weren't all like that, of course. The bigger outfits, like Gnome and Shasta, farmed out most of these problems to commercial book manufacturers. Arkham House and Fantasy Press books are distinguishable from today's commercial products by the simple fact that they are among the best-looking items in your library. But there is not one in which the careful eye will not detect some trace of ingenuousness, some certain sign that the publisher concerned was copying what he remembered from the books of his youth — the J. Allen St. John illustrations in his pre-War Grossett & Dunlap Tarzan books, the creamy paper of the days when pulp forests were not yet the property of newspaper cartels.

These are the things that catch the eye as one leafs through one of these productions. They are the signs of love, dreams and spirit, even among the scoundrels.

—ALGIS BUDRYS

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THE GOOD NEW DAYS

BY FRITZ LEIBER

They were tearing our world down around us. Too bad they weren't tearing us down too!

"They don't build slums like they used to," Whitey Edwards told me, reaching up for a loose corner of the flexo and pulling it down to prove his point. It domed springily over our dreg-bottomed coffee cups, revealing in the hidden space behind it the limp multicolored spaghetti of the utilities piping: gas, water, metered syntho-milk, sewage, coaxed TV, med-mist, Musik, robo-talk, robo-juice, tele, vele, elec, gelec, and such. Few of them running fat with their peculiar contributions to the good life, I judged.

"That may be so," I answered, slapping aside the dodderer's hands and thumbing the blue elastic panel back in place with a fast rub along its adhesive edge. Again it decently covered the flaccid tangle of what looked like rainbow-hued sheep's gut and rubber unmentionables. "But they built Ma like a bull and she'll gore and trample you if she finds you tearing down her kitchen. It's bad enough what the giant centipedes are doing."

The jumbo TV, jammed between sink and fridge flickered weak and ghostly. A gaggle of five-job wives and eight-job men were having a closed-end dis-

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cussion of everything in creation on the executive patio edge of a swimming pool big enough to hide a space-to-seabottom cruiser. Their sweet eldritch cackle was unintelligible, but their state of undress was a slight counter-irritant to boredom.

Whitey Edwards sighed, not looking at these suburban goddesses, but squinting his rheumy eyes against the Monday sun coming up like doom over the dusty flats between Beatsville and the Henleys' happy if fragile little family castle. Earth's spotted, spitting, seething star shot its angry rays under the great awning rigged in front of our windows and door.

"Once," the old boy said, shaking the head-topping that gave him his name, "they built slums solid with steel beams and heavy lath and great bloody pipes of iron and tile and lead that made 'em think twice before they tore 'em down. But now . . ." He sighed his wheezy grief. Whitey'd used to be a con-and-destruction worker decades back, before the robots took that over, before I was born.

The TV zoomered in on a taut little job in bolero jacket and loincloth. The sound cleared for her fast happy words ". . . caring for this pool put my husband and I in the pool-counselor raquette . . ." and died.

I started to tell Whitey I had even more current job-sorrows than his. Since Thursday I'd been terminated from my street-smiler's job for competing with the psychiatrists, robot and human, and for all I know with the giant centipedes. Just then my brother Dick erupted from the bed-closets, throwing clothes over his sallow nakedness like a Gypsy escaping from a Nazi gas chamber — or as if he were a six-job man at least and not a sprint-in-the-gutter one-jobber. And with that job only since Friday night after being three weeks on probationary relief.

I called sweetly at him, "Are you scared a customer will put a gush of quarters into one of your metal bandits with her own little pinkies if you're a minute late?"

Dick scowled, gyrating around a stubborn trouser leg. "Don't you worry, Dickie," I kept on. "All the women I illicitly psyched were as nervous of machinery as sex, they wanted a man to do it for them."

Society, graciously, used to let people work vending and other coin-operated machines, like laundromats. But now, like laundromats too, you have to pay an attendant to do it for you — because machines are temperamental and individual enterprise is almost as holy as money and

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anyway, there aren't enough jobs to go around more than two or three times.

Dick groggled something at me and got the door open, all set for a spring-heel take-off. But there in his way was a tiny man, dressed like a respectable beetle, with dimpled fist raised to knock. He had glasses with zoomer lenses; silver antennae quivered out of his gray hat; a flat black belly-box was his ventral carapace. He looked around, especially at the cluttered floor, as if we were a touch unsavory, but he held his ground.

As Dick paused at this coleopterous apparition, Ma came charging out of the bed-closets, red in the face and black was the rest of her. She grappled Dick around the elbows and roared, "Stop! No son of mine is going out to give battle to the 21st Century on an empty stomach." Grabbing a quarter orange she shoved it between his teeth like a boxer's mouthpiece and then snatching this way and that she slammed a sandwich in his one hand and a cup in the other and on the next time around poured it steaming full.

No one can deny that Ma stands squarely in back of her four sons, like the manager of a quartet of fistic champions, conscious of our genius and determined that it get recognition in the form of seven- or eight-job careers. Though at the moment Dick was the only one of us with any job at all, except for Tom, who lives away with his wife and two kids. But obstructions and set-backs never daunt Ma. It's not the money she's after, mostly, it's the glory of the House of Henley pitted against the whole bloody world.

Pricked by tender filial warmth I eyed her — a murderous son-punishing behemoth but my blessed mother — while Whitey gave her an unseen wave. He's an old admirer she tolerates ever since Pa recognized her superior nuclear power and died.

Dick bit out and swallowed the meat of the orange and tongued aside the peel so as to yell that the coffee was burning his hand and what would it do to his throat? Ma ripped the fridge open against the pull of the great spring I'd fixed outside to keep it shut since the latch broke. She whisked out an ice-cube and tucked it in Dick's cup. The fridge door thudded shut and the spring whirred like a rattlesnake about to jump loose and strike, but it didn't.

Then Dick gulped his coffee while Ma held him and screeched in his ear about using lunch hour to scout for a second job and not stalk girls. When he'd

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finished his drink, she gagged him with his sandwich and let him go.

The beetle-man dodged aside. Dick took off with a straight-line velocity that would have broken his neck and scattered his bones if we'd still been living on the twentieth floor and not in this ground-level flat they tricked us into exchanging for.

The TV blinked and — presto — there was a soldierly file of eight-job men (tabbed for that by the digit on their left shoulder) single-footing with pleasant monotony past the golden plastic statue of a twelve-jobber. Each as he reached screen-center turned head and shouted an inaudible by optimistic something at me and bared all his perfectly tended teeth in a dazzling grin.

I breathed a happy sigh and got set for a spell of quiet — at least until the centipedes decided to start scuttling — but just then the beetle-man poked his head in and piped politely at Ma, "Good morning, Mrs. Henley, I'm your area med statistician, come to take your blood-pressure and photo-snap your insides and all for posterity, like we arranged for a week ago."

Ma slowly turned her head and glared at him like a bull that spots the matador, or, more likely, a peanut-vendor strolling across the ring. The red in her face went purple and she slowly reached for the bubbling coffee flask and slowly lifted it. The beetle-man innocently watched the lethal globe ascend with its tip-tilting seething brown hemicore, as if all this were a job-indoctrination demonstration in astrophysics.

Whitey started up, but I pushed him back in his chair, saying rapidly, "Not you. Even being an old friend of the family wouldn't save you from the horns at this moment."

Then I rasped loud as ambulance-brakes at Ma, "Hold your hand, you murdering old frump!"

She turned at once, as I'd known she would. I cited her and she charged me with the coffee flask high, very much like a small Miura, but armed in a fashion to have made Manolete himself turn pale. But I slipped her with a half veronica and as she went past I kissed her low on the back of the neck, just at the spot where the matador's sword goes in. I whisked my arms around her beloved thick waist, and the next instant she and Whitey and I were as happy as tin larks together flitting through a sparkling star cluster, and she was pouring fresh coffee for us.

But the bettle-man, never

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dreaming the deadly peril he'd been in, advanced another step into the kitchen and called, "Mrs. Henley, it's very needful you have your medical inspection. You're distorting area med statistics and there are drastic penalties for evading med census. No need for you to undress, just hold still now —"

I pushed the coffee flask back against the wall and I stroked Ma as I held her tight, so she didn't go quite as purple as she howled at him, "You filthy med-spy! — do you think I'll submit to your peepings and be stuff for your filthy pictures when I'm not granted decent human med service if I do sicken? Here I have four grand sons, supermen all — Meaghan here, who's a master mind doctor, and Harry who's still in bed, the greatest poet in the world, and Dick the Prince of Personalities, whom you saw speeding to work and I need not comment on, and Tom, who's a bloody wonder — and the filthy world takes so little note of them that if I go to the clinic it's only robot doctors who'll see me and never a flesh-and-blood physician!"

Whatever the topic of her rant, Ma always gets in a commercial for her boys.

The beetle-man quivered back a little at all that, but not very far, and piped soothingly, "Mrs. Henley, there's nothing vulgar or inferior about robo-med. The Secretary of Mental Health himself prefers—" he started to take another step into the room.

"That old sham!" Ma roared, palpitating in my grasp and purpling dark. "He's the same one whose minions are forever sentencing my genius son Harry to the clutches of the remedial psychiatrists."

"But Mrs. Henley," the little fellow went on with rash courage, "I can see with my own eyes you're not in the best of health. An immediate med-check —"

That gave me my opening and I shoved Ma into Whitey's arms and advanced on the beetle-man quickly, wavering my finger like a sword between his bug eyes. "You watch yourself, lad," I cried, "or they'll be terminating you for making diagnoses who are only a census-taker. That's what the licensed psychers did to me for adding only a few words of insight and wisdom to my street-smiling."

At that very moment a ghostly pattering began and swiftly grew louder. It seemed to come from everywhere.

"What's that?" the little chap asked wonderingly.

"The giant centipedes," I told him.

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He paled and his zoomered eyes searched the shadows under table and sink as he scuttled backwards, and just at that moment, perhaps from the floor being swayed by our movements, the great spring on the fridge came loose and went klishing across the floor very close to his feet — a twenty-inch coil of gray wire. He leaped for the lintel of the doorway to hoist himself out of reach of the venomous monster of his imagination, but he missed and fell and went leaping off as if old Fu-Manchu's whole blessed menagerie were at his heels. In pure pity I followed him under the great awning, polka-dotted now by the shadows showing through of the stuff pattering down on it, and caught up with him just beyond the mounting flake-drift.

"Don't be frightened," I told him, grappling him gently and forcing him to lift his zoomers to the ragged-topped wall behind, now only four to six stories high instead of the thirty it had been a week ago. Along its roller coaster margin two sinuous many-legged great silver beasties scampered, chomping great bites out of it and raining the digested fragments down from their rear ends in concrete cornflakes.

"Those are the giant centipedes," I explained. "Demolishment robots, only."

I was thinking of how Harry might make a shuddery poem of them: glittery cosmic crawlers nibbling the gray rim of infinity, eating their way in toward us from the ends of the universe — when at that instant a weightier chunk, rejected by one of the creature's delicate digestive apparatus, no doubt, came thunking down like a meteor not four feet from us, denting the hard ground and raising a geyser of dust. The beetle-man darted off a dozen more steps while I ducked back under the awning, calling to him, "Now be off with you, little official, and trouble Ma no more. She's too much for you, but let that not cast you down. Look on her as a revenant from a hardier, crueller age — a duchess out of place."

I'd no sooner got back in the kitchen, where Ma and Whitey were chatting over their coffee, than Ellie, Dick's wife, came out of the bed-closets full-dressed with bright suitcases in her hands and a dirty dark look in her eyes. She was saying, "Listen all of you, for I'll not tell it twice, I'm leaving that one-job no-good and going back to my last husband, who's still got the three jobs I left him with when I thought to better myself by entering this house of mad pride and sloth and poets snoring," and

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she brushed past me, the silver spring twinging again as she chanced to kick it.

"Meaghan, let her go, who can't appreciate the Prince of Personalities," Ma said to me loftily, her color down to lady-like bright pink again, but I still would have followed and argued with Ellie — Dick didn't deserve to be deserted when he'd just got a toe on the bottom rung of the ladder, which of course was why she was leaving him though she didn't know it, a jealous no-job little wifey — except that just then who should appear in the doorway but my eldest brother, Tom, filling it with his big grin and his great shoulders and his aura of three-job success — or would it be four now? — and saying, "Hi, Ma. Ellie leaving Dick again? Who's the tiny one hanging around outside? Housing official come to coax you once more from this death trap? Hello, Whitey. No, no coffee, Ma, I want to talk to Meaghan here. I've got something for the lad!"

I knew what that meant, of course, and I was already hunched on my hands and knees, starting to fix the spring to the fridge again — a job that might easily take the rest of the day, I decided — when I felt Ma's kindly talons on my shoulders, lifting me up, and she saying, "Whitey'll fix that, Meaghan," and then her beloved claws were propelling me to a seat at the table flush against the blue flexo, with my cup in front of me and beyond that Tom's great face as full of a smile of eager elder-brother benignity as my cup was of steaming coffee — Ma having poured again and dropped in a pinch of dexy (I saw her) to give me spirit.

All the while I was thinking chiefly, *What job's he found now that's so bad he won't take it himself but offer it to me?* It'd have to be pretty bad, for at last count Tom's three jobs were grinding mirrors for leisure-time astronomers who hadn't time to grind their own — that's one — and selling retailers a brand of all-cornsilk cancer-free cigarets with the genuine coal-tar taste and the nicotine life — that's two — and answering for a robot answering service whenever the decibal-rating of the caller's voice began to indicate extreme rage. He still had the third job, at any rate, by the phone-rig hanging around his neck.

"Meaghan," he beamed, "next to an all-girl squad of revivalist angels, there's naught so wondrous as brother-love. I got something great for you. By the by, I've Number Four myself

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now — I travel in ladies' glow-in-the-dark underthings."

As Ma raised a cheer at that, I looked around for escape, but Whitey was squatting at the fridge and blocking the door to the outer world, as happy with his tinkering as a great-grandfather cockroach (one of which was walking up his leg) while Ma, cheering still but with a policeman's eye on me, was taking a cup of coffee big and smoking as a volcano into the bedclosets — to fire Harry's poetic genius, no doubt, or in lieu of that toss him on his lazy feet.

"Meaghan —" Tom began, but just then his neck phone rang and he twitched it on and I could hear a voice like angry wasps. Tom listened and his face grew pink — he takes after Ma in that — and he said. "Certainly, madam. However —" and then his face grew purple and he began to bubble his mouth like a fish.

I leaned across the table and put my lips to the mouthpiece and shouted, "I love you dearly, unknown, indeed I do. I love you dearly, madam, brood upon that," and I twitched the thing off.

"That won't satisfy her." Tom said when he got his right color back and his breath.

"It will for twenty minutes," I told him, "and what in this world is good for any longer?" And then I added, reckless in my light-heartedness, "You were saying . . .?"

"Meaghan," Tom began again, "I know you had this trifling street-smiler's job —"

"Not so trifling or little," I defended, though I hadn't intended to. "The sociologists decided people looked too tense and glum going back and forth to work and shopping and so on, so they hired folk like myself to mingle among 'em and strike up talk, casual-like, to cheer 'em up. Not quite the worst idea in the world, either."

"Yes, but you went too far," Tom reminded me. "You pried into people's minds to find their real troubles and set 'em straight. That's psychers' work, my lad, and you can't blame that august profession for resenting your competition and having you terminated."

"I helped the people I talked to," I countered stubbornly. "I couldn't have talked to them at all, Tom, if I hadn't something solid to say."

"I love you dearly, madam, brood upon that," Tom said. "Solid!"

"I don't worry 'em or push any of their desperation buttons, though I glimpsed banks of those," I protested on. "I just

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encouraged 'em to widen their minds and feelings a little and get some of the comic side-wash of others' troubles and cheer up naturally."

"There you've hit the nub of it," Tom asserted, wagging a finger in my face. "You tried to deliver more than your job called for, instead of learning to do it with a minimum of effort and finding another job to go with it, to swell your income — and then another after that." He gave a quick look around — to make sure Ma hadn't come back, I soon realized — and then leaning forward said with a confidential hush, "Oh, Meaghan, my boy, I've learned so much of the world since I got away from here and Ma's no longer firing me with resentments and wild ambitions. The world's a very tidy comfortable place if only you'll remember there are three billion other lunatic climbers in it — and do no more than you're told and watch the smiles and frowns of your superiors and keep your eyes open and your nostrils flared for flicker or scent of another chance to make money. Step fast, keep adding one little job to the next like beads on a necklace, and forget Ma and her wild dreams. Oh and did I tell you my Katie's got two jobs herself now too? — and never a one she'd have had with Ma around to hold her down."

"Ma's all right," I told him sharply. "She's got more courage and determination and vision than the four of us'll ever have together. And such a fierce self-punishing drive I wonder she's still alive. How would you ever have got out of here to a place of your own without Ma booting you?"

"True, true," he agreed. "Nevertheless. Ma's a hopeless romantic. She wants her four sons to be Dukes of the World, lording it over all."

I couldn't help chuckling at that. "When I was still street-smiling," I confided, "a little man, who thought he was a great romantic, opened his mind to me wanting only to escape from the prison of his life and aim a flashing sword at other men and capture with love their women — and corral all the single girls going around loose too. After we both looked at this stirring picture a while, we realized that what he really wanted was to have all women mother him and puff him up and lead him through life like a great bobbing red balloon."

"That's the way with all romantics, including Ma," Tom said, taking advantage of me straightway. "She wants her sons to be princes and kings, or board

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chairmen at all events, not realizing there's a billion others starting up the success-ladder with them — and not one with a genuine ion drive. Not realizing that the competition's too stiff for any man to dream of being more than an eight-job statistic with his peers. Or ten at most."

The TV now was sailing over a great pile of gently crumpled bedclothes, which struck me as most pleasant and unlikely. Then I realized it was orbiting the Earth high above the clouds and there low in the foreground were the backs of beautifully barbered heads and now a sign flashing across the clouds: "Vacation Jaunts through Space for Nine-Job Heroes of Democracy."

"You're right about the competition," I agreed quickly with Tom. "I'm no enemy of democracy, I'm one of its darlingest friends, but there's no question it's upped the competition more than ever it was in Earth's history. We've got more machines, more health, more freedom of movement, more education, more leisure, more time for making money in our spare time, more almost equal people, *and* more incentives, more quick showy rewards for the quickly successful — with the result that the competition burns us out fast enough to equalize all the longevity created by medical advance."

"It doesn't seem to be burning you out," Tom observed.

"Now listen here, Tom my boy," I continued, warming to my subject. "Isn't there something altogether crazy about a world that wants to turn everyone into merchants no matter what their natural psychological class — a world that's turned even scientists and poets and adventurers and soldiers and priests into merchants busy selling themselves — a world that's feared so much that the machine would take away all jobs that it's gone ape creating jobs and financial ventures by the billions. With each reduction in working hours paralleled by an equal or greater increase in time spent on part-time and side-line jobs — a world that's so money-conscious that a man who takes his eyes off the dollar for a month or a day or even ten seconds —"

"Your eyes don't look red with squinting at silver," Tom observed like a lemon. "Besides, you're deafening me."

Just then Ma came lumbering daintily in again and asked Tom, "What's this wondrous job you've got for Meaghan? I can't wait any longer to hear." Just as if she hadn't been hearing every word and writhing at my negativisms.

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I groaned as if on the verge of defeat. Tom laughed and said, "I was forgetting about that. What with Mea talking of billions of jobs, my one got lost in the stampede. Well, it seems that the repair robots are getting unpredictable everywhere, spending too much time on some jobs and not enough on others, and passing up still others altogether. One repaired a leak so well it built an armor wall six feet thick around the leak and himself — Fortunata, they called that one. Another found a leak and did nothing but start making identical leaks in all the pipes he followed — until thousands of them were squirting behind him. A demolition robot started shooting rocks at a new-risen glastic building. Yet the circuits of these robots are in perfect order and they always behave properly under factory tests. So what must be done is to have a man follow each metal trouble-shooter and note every move he makes, watch his behavior day after day — taking weeks if necessary so the robot will get used to his presence and not vary his behavior to please or confuse or harm the watcher. Oh, it's a fine sort of job — no work at all — sort of like what they called Sidewalk Inspecting back in the depths of history."

I said, "I suppose the robots they're having the most trouble with are the ones that repair heat-tunnels and sewers and other delightful underground conduits."

"How did you know that?" Tom asked me very quickly. "Old sunken spillways and aquaducts and chimneys too, though — some of the last poking thousands of feet high into the clear heady air. A most healthful job, my boyo — a regular mountain-climbing and spelunking vacation."

I said softly, "I think I'd rather drown parboiled in this coffee cup than play psychiatric aide to a manic genius robot with a breakneck wander-urge who's waiting for his metal consciousness to brighten with its first jeweled unhuman pictures and electricity-loving impulses. The machines are coming awake, did you know that, Tom? All the machines —"

"No, it's but one machine," a softer dreamier voice, mournful as a breeze through dead leaves, cut in on me. The adolescent wraith with hair like blond spiderweb, who was Ma's poet genius and my youngest brother Harry, came drifting in from the bed-closets as if blown rather than walking. I could tell from the light-year look in his blue eyes that he'd conned his re-

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medial psycher out of some pills.

He went on, "The whole Earth is one great metal machine, a dull steel marble amongst the aggies and glassies of the other planets. If anyone ever went out there with earth-eyes and not a spaceman's, he'd see it rolling along, over and over, like a great silver shop-made tumblebug spotted with cities and wet here and there with oceans, blinking the eyes of its ice-caps and smoking its volcanos and folding and unfolding its harrow-footed space-crazy legs in time with the phases of the moon. And if you looked real close you'd see millions of fleas jumpin' off it and beginning the long fall to the nadir."

At that moment the TV jumped to a 24-hour satellite starward of Terra and showed us the whole moonlit Earth backed by the Milky Way, as if snared by a diamond-dewy spiderweb. Ma squeaked a proud sigh at Harry's words thus coming out illustrated.

"Will you take the job?" Tom rasped at me.

"Tomorrow I will for sure," I told him. "And that's all the answer you'll ever get from me — tomorrow or any other day."

Ma tapped her hoof and flashed a rageful eye at me. "Tom," she said to him, "if Meaghan scorns it, how about Harry. Think of it, Harry, you always claim you want to be alone. Roaming those cool tunnels and sewers all by yourself except for some witless machine you'll catch onto in ten minutes. You'll have all the time and quiet in the world to create your poetry. Why, underground your poetry will sprout like roots, I'm sure, and run fast as crabgrass."

"Ma," Harry said, "sooner than take that job I'd head for Beatsville today rather than tomorrow."

"You wouldn't do that, Harry," Ma wailed menacingly. "Tell me you wouldn't." Ma's always prided herself that no matter how slumlike we live and close to Beatsville, we'd never get there. In Beatsville they pretend even worse than in the suburbs, pretend to be supermen and pretend to be animals, and creep each night to the electrified boundary to pick up the food and drink left for them.

But Harry nodded again and then Ma began yelling at Tom that he was trying to break up what was left of her family, having splintered himself off first. Whitey came alive and flapped his hands at her cautiously, like a torero ready to jump the fence. I slitted my eyes as if I were falling asleep. Tom got red as Ma and said the hell with us,

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he was going for good. So Ma stamped this way and that, now roaring at Harry and me for our sloth, now bellowing at Tom for his disloyalty. Then she lifted her arms to heaven and froze.

At that instant the beetle-man popped into the doorway and pointed his antennae at her. No one saw him but me.

Tom's face grew redder and he gave a snort and turned on his heel toward the door just as the beetle-man ducked out of sight. Tom had no sooner stamped out than the beetle-man popped in again behind him, waving a gray-black transparency he'd whipped from his black belly-box.

"Mrs. Henley," he piped rapidly, "I got a perfect shot of all your insides, but that's all that's perfect about it. You must come to the clinic right away with me. Your heart's like a watermelon and your aorta and pulmonary like summer squash." He waggled a finger at me. "Diagnosis by a med-spector is permissable in dire emergencies."

Ma's face went purple. At that instant I felt the building quiver from the top down and a heartbeat later something burst through the awning and struck Tom as if he were a very thick spike and it a hammer driving him into the ground.

Ma screamed a great single scream and took a step forward and then stiffened and fell back and I caught her in my arms and lowered her to the floor and pillowed her head. Outside I could hear the beetle-man buzzing into his neckphone for an ambulance like the fool he was — for Tom's head was smashed to the neck. Then I was wondering how Tom's blood could have got on Ma, for there was blood on her chest and then more and more of it, like a bull fallen from the final thrust and pumping his heart out, and then I realized it was Ma's blood from her lungs, gurgling with her Cheyne-Stokes breathing.

Whitey came fluttering down at her other side.

Harry was standing looking at us and he was trembling, and then we heard the siren far off, and then another, and then the two of them coming closer fast, and as they came closer and their angry wailing grew louder, Harry began to tremble more, and as their sound burst into the open of the razed blocks, he cried, "I'm off to Beatsville," and he was sprinting by the time he went through the door.

I knew what was coming, although there was nothing I could do but hold Ma. Then I knew that what was coming had come, for there was a shout and a

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great squealing of brakes and a scream and a thud, and the brakes still squealing.

Then Ma stopped breathing, but she still looked angry.

It was a long time before anyone came in. I went on holding Ma and wiping her face clean, though it stayed red for all that. I heard one ambulance leave and then the other. Finally a doctor came in, and the beetle-man too, and the doctor looked at Ma and shook his head and said that if only she'd been med-checked regularly it need never have happened, but I told him, "You didn't know Ma." And the beetle-man buzzed into his neck-phone for an ambulance back.

I said chokily, "She died brave, charging the muleta dead on, and I'm damned if I'll award society a single hoof of her, let alone the horns or the tail." No one got it. The beetle-man eyed me and took a surreptitious note.

Then for a while I was signing papers and listening to this and that, but finally they were all gone, the living and dead, and I was alone with Whitey and I remembered we ought to tell Dick.

The TV was showing a great musical review with hundreds of highly talented actors and actresses, all of them seven-job folk and this the eighth job for all of them. Flights of smiles were going back and forth across the screen, like seagulls wheeling at sunset.

The concrete cornflakes were still pattering on the awning. I marched us straight under the hole the rock had made that killed Tom, and they pelted on our hair and shoulders and necks like feathery hail.

We climbed the flake-drift and I paused and turned round. The giant centipedes were busily crawling back and forth, the one swinging aside most cleverly to let the other pass. They'd chewed their way here and there down to the second floor.

I looked down to our shadowed doorway with the faintest flicker of TV still coming out of it, and I thought I'd like to drive a nail a mile long down through the center of that room, pinning it there forever, and engrave in the head of the nail, in letters a foot deep, "A Family Lived Here."

But that was a little beyond the scope of my engineering, so pushing Whitey ahead of me, off I went to tell Dick, laughing and crying. — FRITZ LEIBER

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FOUNDING FATHER

by ISAAC ASIMOV

Five of them had come to the planet. Four were dead. The other had only one chance left — to live forever!

The original combination of catastrophes had taken place five years ago—five revolutions of this planet, HC-12549d by the charts, and nameless otherwise. Six-plus revolutions of Earth, but who was counting—any more?

If the men back home knew, they might say it was a heroic fight, an epic of the Galactic Corps; five men against a hostile world, holding their bitter own for five (or six-plus) years. And now they were dying, the battle lost after all. Three were in final coma, a fourth had his yellow-tinged eyeballs still open, and a fifth was yet on his feet.

But it was no question of heroism at all. It had been five men fighting off boredom and despair and maintaining their metallic bubble of livability only for the most unheroic reason that there was nothing else to do while life remained.

If any of them felt stimulated by the battle, he never mentioned it. After the first year, they stopped talking of rescue, and after the second, a moratorium descended on the word, "Earth."

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But one word remained always present. If unspoken it had to be found in their thoughts: "Ammonia."

It had come first while the landing was being scratched out against all odds on limping motors and in a battered space can.

You allow for bad breaks, of course; you expect a certain number—but one at a time. A stellar flare fries out the hyper-circuits—that can be repaired, given time. A meteorite disaligns the feeder-valves—they can be straightened, given time. A trajectory is miscalculated under tension and a momentarily unbearable acceleration tears out the jump-antennae and dulls the senses of every man on board—but antennae can be replaced and senses will recover, given time.

The chances are one in countless many that all three will happen at once; and still less that they will happen during a particularly tricky landing when the one necessary currency for the correction of all errors, time, is the one thing that is most lacking.

The *Cruiser John* hit that one chance in countless many, and it made a final landing, for it would never lift off a planetary surface again.

That it had landed essentially intact was itself a near-miracle. The five were given life for some years at least. Beyond that, only the blundering arrival of another ship could help, but no one expected that. They had had their life's share of coincidences, they knew, and all had been bad.

That was that.

And the key word was "ammonia." With the surface spiralling upward, and death (mercifully quick) facing them at considerably better than even odds, Chou somehow had time to note the absorption spectrograph, which was registering raggedly.

"Ammonia," he cried out. The others heard but there was no time to pay attention. There was only the wrenching fight against a quick death for the sake of a slow one.

When they landed finally, on sandy ground with sparse, ragged bluish vegetation; reedy grass; stunted tree-like objects with blue bark and no leaves; no sign of animal life; and with an almost greenish cloud-streaked sky above—the word came back to haunt them.

"Ammonia?" said Petersen heavily.

Chou said, "Four percent."

"Impossible," said Petersen.

But it wasn't. The books didn't say impossible. What the Galactic Corps had discovered was that a planet of a certain

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mass and volume and at a certain temperature was an ocean planet and had one of two atmospheres: nitrogen/oxygen or nitrogen/carbon dioxide. In the former case, life was rampant in the latter, it was primitive.

No one checked beyond mass, volume and temperature any longer. One took the atmosphere (one or the other of them) for granted. But the books didn't say it had to be so; just that it always was so. Other atmospheres were thermodynamically possible, but extremely unlikely so they weren't found in actual practice.

Until now. The men of the *Cruiser John* had found one and were bathed for the rest of such life as they could eke out by a nitrogen/carbon dioxide/ammonia atmosphere.

The men converted their ship into an underground bubble of Earth-type surroundings. They could not lift off the surface, nor could they drive a communicating beam through hyperspace, but all else was salvageable. To make up for inefficiencies in the cycling system, they could even tap the planet's own water and air supply within limits; provided, of course, they subtracted the ammonia.

They organized exploring parties since their suits were in excellent condition and it passed the time. The planet was harmless; no animal life; sparse plant life everywhere. Blue, always blue; ammoniated chlorophyll; ammoniated protein.

They set up laboratories, analyzed the plant components, studied microscopic sections, compiled vast volumes of findings. They tried growing native plants in ammonia-free atmosphere and failed. They made themselves into geologists and studied the planet's crust; astronomers and studied the spectrum of the planet's sun.

Barrere would say sometimes, "Eventually, the Corps will reach this planet again and we'll leave a legacy of knowledge for them. It's a unique planet after all. There might not be another Earth-type with ammonia in all the Milky Way."

"Great," said Sandropoulos, bitterly. "What luck for us."

Sandropoulos worked out the thermodynamics of the situation. "A metastable system," he said. "The ammonia disappears steadily through geochemical oxidation that forms nitrogen; the plants utilize nitrogen and reform ammonia, adapting themselves to the presence of ammonia. If the rate of plant formation of ammonia dropped two percent, a declining spiral would set in. Plant life would wither, re-

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ducing the ammonia still further and so on."

"You mean if we killed enough plant life," said Vlassov, "we could wipe out the ammonia."

"If we had air-sleds and wide-angle blasters, and a year to work in, we might," said Sandropoulos, "but we haven't and there's a better way. If we could get our plants going, the formation of oxygen through photosynthesis would increase the rate of ammonia oxidation. Even a small localized rise would lower the ammonia in the region, stimulate Earth-plant growth further, and inhibit the native growth, drop the ammonia further and so on."

They became gardeners through all the growing season. That was, after all, routine for the Galactic Corps. Life on Earth-type planets was usually of the water/protein type, but variation was infinite and otherworld food was rarely nourishing and even more often happened (not always, but often) that some types of Earth-plants would overrun and drown out the native flora. With the native flora held down, other Earth-plants could take root.

Dozens of planets had been converted into new Earths in this fashion. In the process Earth-plants developed hundreds of hardy varieties that flourished under extreme conditions—All the better with which to seed the next planet.

The ammonia would kill any Earth-plant, but the seeds at the disposal of the *Cruiser John* were not true Earth-plants but otherworld mutations of these plants. They fought hard but not well enough. Some varieties grew in a feeble, sickly manner and died.

At that they did better than did microscopic life. The planet's bacterioids were far more flourishing than was the planet's straggly blue plant-life. The native microorganisms drowned out any attempt at competition from Earth-samples. The attempt to seed the alien soil with Earth-type bacterial flora in order to aid the Earth-plants failed.

Vlassov shook his head, "It wouldn't do anyway. If our bacteria survived, it would only be by adapting to the presence of ammonia."

Sandropoulos said, "Bacteria won't help us. We need the plants; they carry the oxygen manufacturing systems."

"We could make some ourselves," said Petersen. "We could electrolyze water."

"How long will our equipment last? If we could only get our plants going it would be like electrolyzing water forever, little by little, but year after year, till the planet gave up."

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Barrere said, "Let's treat the soil then. It's rotten with ammonium salts. We'll bake the salts out and replace the ammonia-free soil."

"And what about the atmosphere?" asked Chou.

"In ammonia-free soil, they may catch hold despite the atmosphere. They almost make it as is."

They worked like longshoremen, but with no real end in view. None really thought it would work, and there was no future for themselves, personally, even if it did work. But working passed the days.

The next growing season, they had their ammonia-free soil, but Earth-plants still grew only feebly. They even placed domes over several shoots and pumped ammonia-free air within. It helped slightly but not enough. They adjusted the chemical composition of the soil in every possible fashion. There was no reward.

The feeble shoots produced their tiny whiffs of oxygen, but not enough to topple the ammonia atmosphere off its base.

"One more push," said Sandropoulos, "one more. We're rocking it; we're rocking it; but we can't knock it over."

Their tools and equipment blunted and wore out with time and the future closed in steadily. Each month there was less room for maneuver.

When the end came at last, it was with almost gratifying suddenness. There was no name to place on the weakness and vertigo. No one actually suspected direct ammonia poisoning. Still, they were living off the algal growth of what had once been ship-hydroponics for years and the growths were themselves aberrant with possible ammonia contamination.

It could have been the workings of some native microorganism which might finally have learned to feed off them. It might even have been an Earthly microorganism, mutated under the conditions of a strange world.

So three died at last and did so, circumstances be praised, painlessly. They were glad to go, and leave the useless fight.

Chou said, in a voiceless whisper, "It's foolish to lose so badly."

Petersen, alone of the five to be on his feet (was he immune, whatever it was?) turned a grieving face toward his only living companion.

"Don't die," he said, "don't leave me alone."

Chou tried to smile. "I have no choice. But you can follow us, old friend. Why fight? The tools are gone and there is no way of winning now, if there ever was."

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Even now, Petersen fought off final despair by concentrating on the fight against the atmosphere. But his mind was weary, his heart worn out, and when Chou died the next hour, he was left with four corpses to work with.

He stared at the bodies, counting over the memories, stretching them back (now that he was alone and dared wail) to Earth itself, which he had last seen on a visit eleven years before.

He would have to bury the bodies. He would break off the bluish branches of the native leafless trees and build crosses of them. He would hang the space helmet of each man on top and prop the oxygen cylinders below. Empty cylinders to symbolize the lost fight.

A foolish sentiment for men who could no longer care, and for future eyes that might never see.

But he was doing it for himself, to show respect for his friends, and respect for himself, too, for he was not the kind of man to leave his friends untended in death while he himself could stand.

Besides—

Besides? He sat in weary thought for some moments.

While he was still alive, he would fight with such tools as were left. He would bury his friends.

He buried each in a spot of ammonia-free soil they had so laboriously built up; buried them without shroud and without clothing; leaving them naked in the hostile ground for the slow decomposition that would come with their own microorganisms before those, too, died with the inevitable invasion of the native bacterioids.

Petersen placed each cross, with its helmet and oxygen cylinders, propped each with rocks then turned away, grim and sad-eyed, to return to the buried ship that he now inhabited alone.

He worked each day and eventually the symptoms came for him, too.

He struggled into his space suit and came to the surface for what he knew would be one last time.

He fell to his knees on the garden-plots. The Earth plants were green. They had lived longer than ever before. They looked healthy, even vigorous.

They had patched the soil, babied the atmosphere, and now Petersen had used the last tool, the only one remaining at his disposal, and he had given them fertilizer as well—

Out of the slowly corrupting flesh of the Earthmen came the nutrients that supplied the final push. Out of the Earth-plants came the oxygen that would beat

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back the ammonia and push the planet out of the unaccountable niche into which it had stuck.

If Earthmen ever came again (when? a million years hence?) they would find a nitrogen/oxygen atmosphere and a limited flora strangely reminiscent of Earth's.

The crosses would rot and decay, the metal rust and decompose. The bones might fossilize and remain to give a hint as to what happened. Their own records, sealed away, might be found.

But none of that mattered. If nothing at all was ever found, the planet itself, the whole planet, would be their monument.

And Petersen lay down to die in the midst of their victory.

—ISAAC ASIMOV

FORECAST

Actually our editorial this month is our forecast, but it's on a somewhat longer-range scale than usual. Restricting our view to the single issue coming up next, here's what it looks like now:

The lead is by C. C. MacApp, a writer who hitherto has appeared in *Galaxy* only as the author of a couple of biting and sardonically funny short stories like *And All the Earth a Grave* and *A Flask of Fine Arcturan.* Next month's is quite different. It's an adventure story. The place is the planet Mercury. The time, some hundreds of years in the future; and the title is *The Mercurymen.* Pederson has done the cover for it; and if the object you see in the background looks to you like a covered wagon — it is! It has to be, in fact — for reasons you will discover when you read the story.

Robert Silverberg will join us again next issue with a long novelette called *The Warriors of Light.* And we have a pointed and funny novelette by a new writer named Norman Kagan (you may remember that he was one of the "firsts" we print in every issue of our companion magazine, *If,* some time ago. His story then was called *The Mathenauts,* and it was immediately selected for "best of the year" honors). What Kagan is writing about this time is politics — the grandest game of them all, as they say; but in Kagan's story the rules are those invented by Franz Kafka, and naturally enough the story is called *Laugh Along with Franz.*

We also have a couple of shorts of special interest, since both mark the first and long overdue appearance of their authors in *Galaxy.* One is a very *short* one by Arthur C. Clarke (but he calls it the longest story ever written, for reasons you will see when you read it); the other is by Harlan Ellison. If they fit they'll be in!

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Shall We Have a Little Talk?

by ROBERT SHECKLEY

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

Earth didn't just walk in and conquer planets — there were definite rules! Why wouldn't these people cooperate?

I

The landing was a piece of cake despite gravitational vagaries produced by two suns and six moons. Low-level cloud cover could have given him some trouble if Jackson had been coming in visually. But he considered that to be kid stuff. It was better and safer to plug in the computer and lean back and enjoy the ride.

The cloud cover broke up at 2000 feet. Jackson was able to confirm his earlier sighting: there was a city down there, just as sure as sure.

He was in one of the world's loneliest jobs; but his line of work, paradoxically enough, required an extremely gregarious man. Because of this built-in contradiction, Jackson was in the habit of talking to himself. Most of the men in his line of work

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did. Jackson would talk to anyone, human or alien, no matter what their size or shape or color.

It was what he was paid to do, and what he had to do anyhow. He talked when he was alone on the long interstellar runs, and he talked even more when he was with someone or something that would talk back. He figured he was lucky to be paid for his compulsions.

"And not just *paid,* either," he reminded himself. "*Well* paid, and with a bonus arrangement on top of that. And furthermore, this feels like my lucky planet. I feel like I could get rich on this one; unless they kill me down there, of course."

The lonely flights between the planets and the imminence of death were the only disadvantages of this job; but if the work weren't hazardous and difficult, the pay wouldn't be so good.

Would they kill him? You could never tell. Alien life-forms were unpredictable — just like humans, only more so.

"But I don't think they'll kill me," Jackson said. "I just feel downright lucky today."

This simple philosophy had sustained him for years, across the endless lonely miles of space, and in and out of ten, twelve, twenty planets. He saw no reason to change his outlook now.

The ship landed. Jackson switched the status controls to standby.

He checked the analyzer for oxygen and trace-element content in the atmosphere, and took a quick survey of the local microorganisms. The place was viable. He leaned back in his chair and waited. It didn't take long, of course. They — the locals, indigenes, authochtones, whatever you wanted to call them — came out of their city to look at the spaceship. And Jackson looked through the port at them.

"Well now," he said. "Seems like the alien life-forms in this neck of the woods are honest-to-Joe humanoids. That means a five thousand dollar bonus for old Uncle Jackson."

The inhabitants of the city were bipedal monocephaloids. They had the appropriate number of fingers, noses, eyes, ears and mouths. Their skin was a flesh-colored beige, their lips were a faded red, their hair was black, brown or red.

"Shucks, they're just like home-folks!" Jackson said. "Hell, I ought to get an extra bonus for that. Humanoidissmus, eh?"

The aliens wore clothes. Some of them carried elaborately carved lengths of wood like swagger-sticks. The women decorated themselves with carved and enameled ornaments. At a

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flying guess. Jackson ranked them about equivalent to Late Bronze Age on Earth.

They talked and gestured among themselves. Their language was, of course, incomprehensible to Jackson; but that didn't matter. The important thing was that they *had* a language, and that their speech sounds could be produced by his vocal apparatus.

"Not like on that heavy planet last year," Jackson said. "Those supersonic sons of bitches! I had to wear special earphones and mike, and it was 110 in the shade."

The aliens were waiting for him, and Jackson knew it. That first moment of actual contact — it always was a nervous business.

That's when they were most apt to let you have it.

Reluctantly he moved to the hatch, undogged it, rubbed his eyes and cleared his throat. He managed to produce a smile. He told himself, "Don't get sweaty, member, you're just a little old Jackson, don't choke up. Remember you're just a little old interstellar wanderer — kind of galactic vagabond — to extend the hand of friendship and all that jazz. You've just dropped in for a little talk, nothing more. Keep on believing that, sweety, and the extraterrestrial Johns will believe right along with you. Remember Jackson's Law: All intelligent life-forms share the divine faculty of gullibility; which means that the triple-tongued Thung of Orangus V can be conned out of his skin just as easily as Joe Doakes of St. Paul."

And so, wearing a brave, artificial little smile, Jackson swung the port open and stepped out to have a little talk.

"Well now, how y'all?" Jackson asked at once, just to hear the sound of his own voice.

The nearest aliens shrank away from him. Nearly all of them were frowning. Several of the younger ones carried bronze knives in a forearm scabbard. These were clumsy weapons, but as effective as anything ever invented. The aliens started to draw.

"Now take it easy," Jackson said, keeping his voice light and unalarmed.

They drew their knives and began to edge forward. Jackson stood his ground, waiting, ready to bolt through the hatch like a jet-propelled jack-rabbit, hoping he could make it.

Then a third man (might as well call them men Jackson decided) stepped in front of the belligerent two. This one was older. He spoke rapidly. He gestured. The two with the knives looked.

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"That's right," Jackson said encouragingly. "Take a good look. Heap big spaceship. Plenty strong medicine. Vehicle of great power, fabricated by a real advanced technology. Sort of makes you stop and think, doesn't it?"

It did.

The aliens had stopped; and if not thinking, they were at least doing a great deal of talking. They pointed at the ship, then back at their city.

"You're getting the idea," Jackson told them. "Power speaks a universal language, eh, cousins?"

He had been witness to many of these scenes on many different planets. He could nearly write their dialogue for them. It usually went like this:

Intruder lands in outlandish space vehicle, thereby eliciting (1) curiosity, (2) fear and (3) hostility. After some minutes of awed contemplation, one autochthone usually said to his friend: "Hey, that damned metal thing packs one hell of a lot of power."

"You're right, Herbie," his friend Fred, the second autochthon, would reply.

"You bet I'm right," Herbie would say. "And hell, with that much power and technology and stuff, this son of a gun could like *enslave* us: I mean he really could."

"You've hit it, Herbie, that's just exactly what could happen."

"So what I say," Herbie would continue, "I say, let's not take any risks. I mean, *sure*, he *looks* friendly enough, but he's just got too damned much *power*, and that's not right. And right now is the best chance we'll ever get to take him on account of he's just standing there waiting for like an ovation or something. So let's put this bastard out of his misery, and then we can talk the whole thing over, and see how it stacks up situationwise."

"By Jesus, I'm with you!" cries Fred. Others signify their assent.

"Good for you, lads," cries Herbie. "Let's wade in and take this alien joker like *now!*"

So they start to make their move; but suddenly, at the last second, Old Doc (the third autochthon) intervenes, saying, "Hold it a minute, boys, we can't do it like that. For one thing, we got laws around here—"

"To hell with that," says Fred (a born troublemaker and somewhat simple to boot).

"— and aside from the laws, it would be just too damned dangerous for *us*."

"Me'n Fred here ain't scared," says valiant Herb. "Maybe you better go take in a movie or something, Doc. Us guys'll handle this."

"I was not referring to a short-

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range personal danger," Old Doc says scornfully. "What I fear is the destruction of our city, the slaughter of our loved ones and the annhilation of our culture."

Herb and Fred stop. "What you talking about, Doc? He's just one stinking alien; you push a knife in his guts, he'll bleed like anyone else."

"Fools! Schlemiels!" thunders the wise old Doc. "Of course you can kill him! But what happens after that?"

"Huh?" says Fred, squinting his china-blue pop eyes.

"Idiots! Cochons! You think this is the only spaceship these aliens got? You think they don't even know whereabouts this guy has gone? Man, you gotta assume they got *plenty* more ships where this one came from, and you gotta also assume that they'll be damned mad if this ship doesn't show up when it's supposed to, and you gotta assume that when these aliens learn the score they're gonna be damned sore and buzz back here and stomp on everything and everybody."

"How come I gotta assume that? asks feeble-witted Fred.

"Cause it's what *you'd* do in a deal like that, right?"

"I guess maybe I would at that," says Fred, with a sheepish grin. "Yeah, I just might do that little thing. But look, maybe *they* wouldn't.

"Maybe, maybe," mimics wise old Doc. "Well, baby, we can't risk the whole ball game on a goddamned *maybe*. We can't afford to kill this alien joker or the chance that *maybe* his people wouldn't do what any reasonable-minded guy would do, which is namely to blow us all to hell."

"Well, I suppose we maybe can't," Herbie says. "But Doc, what *can* we do?"

"Just wait and see what he wants . . ."

II

A scene very much like that, according to reliable reconstruction, had been enacted at least thirty or forty times. It usually resulted in a policy of wait-and-see. Occasionally the contactor from Earth was killed before wise counsel could prevail; but Jackson was paid to take risks like that.

Whenever the contactor was killed, retribution followed with swift and terrible inevitability. Also with regret, of course, because Earth was an extremely civilized place and accustomed to living within the law. No civilized law-abiding race likes to commit genocide. In fact, the folks on Earth consider genocide a very unpleasant matter, and they don't like to read about it

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or anything like it in their morning papers. Envoys must be protected, of course, and murder must be punished; everybody knows that. But it still doesn't feel nice to read about a genocide over your morning coffee. News like that can spoil a man's entire day. Three or four genocides and a man just might get angry enough to switch his vote.

Fortunately, there was never much occasion for that sort of mess. Aliens usually caught on pretty fast. Despite the language barrier, aliens learned that you simply *don't* kill Earthmen.

And then, later, bit by bit, they learned all the rest.

The hot-heads had sheathed their knives. Everybody was smiling except Jackson, who was grinning like a hyena. The aliens were making graceful arm-and-leg motions, probably of welcome.

"Well, that's real nice," Jackson said, making a few graceful gestures of his own. "Makes me feel real to-home. And now, suppose you take me to your leader, show me the town and all that jazz. Then I'll set myself down and figure out that lingo of yours, and we'll have a little talk. And after that, everything will proceed splendidly. *En avant!*"

So saying, Jackson stepped out at a brisk pace in the direction of the city. After a brief hesitation, his new-found friends fell into step behind him.

Everything was moving according to plan.

Jackson, like all the other Contactors, was a polyglot of singular capabilities. As basic equipment, he had an eidetic memory and an extremely discriminating ear. More important, he possessed a startling aptitude for language and an uncanny intuition for meaning. When Jackson came up against an incomprehensible tongue, he picked out, quickly and unerringly, the significant units, the fundamental building blocks of the language. Quite without effort he sorted vocalizations into cognitive, volitional and emotional aspects of speech. Grammatical elements presented themselves at once to his practiced ear. Affixes and suffixes were no trouble; word sequence, pitch and reduplication were no sweat. He didn't know much about the science of linguistics, but he didn't need to know. Jackson was a natural. Linguistics had been developed to describe and explain things which he knew intuitively.

He had not yet encountered the language which he could not learn. He never really expected to find one. As he often told his friends in the Forked Tongue Club in New York, "Waal, shukins, there just really ain't nuthin

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tough about them alien tongues. Leastwise, not the ones I've run across. I mean that sincerely. I mean to tell you, boys, that the man who can express hisself in Sioux or Khmer ain't going to encounter too much trouble out there amongst the stars."

And so it had been, to date . . .

Once in the city, there were many tedious ceremonies which Jackson had to endure. They stretched on for three days — about par for the course. He knew the reason for them, of course; it wasn't every day that a traveller from Space came in for a visit. So naturally enough every mayor, governor, president and alderman, *and* their wives, wanted to shake his hand. It was all very understandable, but Jackson resented the waste of his time. He had work to do, some of it not very pleasant, and the sooner he got started the quicker it would be over.

On the fourth day he was able to reduce the official nonsense to a minimum. That was the day in which he began in earnest to learn the local language.

A language, as any linguist will tell you, is undoubtedly the most beautiful creation one is ever likely to encounter. But with that beauty goes a certain element of danger.

Language might aptly be compared to the sparkling, ever-changing face of the sea. Like the sea, you never know what reefs may be concealed in its pellucid depths. The brightest water hides the most treacherous shoals.

Jackson, well-prepared for trouble, encountered none at first. The main language (Hon) of this planet (Na), was spoken by the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants (En-a-To-Na — literally, men of the Na, or Naians, as Jackson preferred of think of them). Hon seemed quite a straightforward affair. It used one term for one concept, and allowed no fusions, juxtapositions or agglutinations. Concepts were built up by sequences of simple words ('spaceship' was ho-pa-aie-an — boat-flying-outer-sky). Thus, Hon was very much like Chinese and Annamite on Earth. Pitch differences were employed not only intentionally to differentiate between homonyns, but also positionally, to denote gradations of 'perceived realism,' bodily discomfort and three classes of pleasurable expectation. All of which was mildly interesting but of no particular difficulty to a competent linguist.

To be sure, a language like Hon was rather a bore because of the long word-lists one had to memorize. But pitch and position could be fun, as well as being ab-

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solutely essential if one wanted to make any sense out of the sentence-units. So, taken all in all, Jackson was not dissatisfied, and he absorbed the language as quickly as it could be given to him.

It was a proud day for Jackson, about a week later, when he could say to his tutor: "A very nice and pleasant good morning to you, most estimable and honored tutor, and how is your blessed health upon this glorious day?'

"Felicitations most ird wunk!" the tutor replied with a smile of deep warmth. "Your accent, dear pupil, is superb! Positively gor nak, in fact, and your grasp of my dear mother tongue is little short of ur nak tai."

Jackson glowed all over from the gentle old tutor's compliments. He felt quite pleased with himself. Of course, he hadn't recognized several words; ird wunk and ur nak tai sounded faintly familiar, but gor nak was completely unknown. Still lapses were expected of a beginner in any language. He did know enough to understand the Naians, and to make himself understood by them. And that was what his job required.

He returned to his spaceship that afternoon. The hatch had been standing open during his entire stay on Na but he found

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that not a single article had been stolen. He shook his head ruefully at this, but refused to let it upset him. He loaded his pockets with a variety of objects and sauntered back to the city. He was ready to perform the final and most important part of his job.

III

In the heart of the business district, at the intersection of Um and Alhretto, he found what he was looking for: a real estate office. He entered, and was taken to the office of Mr. Erum, a junior partner of the firm.

"Well, well, well, well!" Erum said, shaking hands heartily. "This is a real honor, sir, a very considerable and genuine privilege. Are you thinking of acquiring a piece of property?"

"That was my intention," Jackson said. "Unless, of course, you have discriminatory laws that forbid your selling to a foreigner."

"No difficulty there," Erum said. "In fact, it'll be a veritable orai of a pleasure to have a man from your distant and glorious civilization in our midst."

Jackson restrained a snicker. "The only other difficulty I can imagine is the question of legal tender. I don't have any of your currency, of course; but I have certain quantities of gold, platinum, diamonds and other objects which are considered valuable on Earth."

"They are considered valuable here, too," Erum said. "Quantities, did you say? My dear sir, we will have no difficulties; not even a blaggle shall mit or ows, as the poet said."

"Quite so," Jackson replied. Erum was using some words he didn't know, but that didn't matter. The main drift was clear enough. "Now, suppose we begin with a nice industrial site. After all, I'll have to do something with my time. And after that we can pick out a house."

"Most decidedly prominex," Erum said gaily. "Suppose I just raish through my listings here . . . Yes, what do you say to a bromicaine factory? It's in a first-class condition, and could easily be converted to vor manufacture, or used as it is."

"Is there any real market for bromicaine?" Jackson asked.

"Well, bless my muergentan, of course there is! Bromicaine is indispensable, though its sales are seasonable. You see, refined bromicaine, or ariisi, is used by the protigash devolvers, who of course harvest by the solstice-season, except in those branches of the industry that have switched over to ticothene revature. Those from a steadily—'"

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"Fine, fine," Jackson said. He didn't care what a bromicaine was, and never expected to see one. As long as it was a gainful employment of some kind it filled his specifications.

"I'll buy it," he said.

"You won't regret it," Erum told him. "A good bromicaine factory is a garveldis hagatis, and menifoy as well."

"Sure," Jackson said, wishing that he had a more extensive Hon vocabulary. "How much?"

"Well, sir, the price is no difficulty. But first you'll have to fill out the ollanbrit form. It is just a few sken questions which ny naga of everyone."

Erum handed Jackson the form. The first question read: "Have you, now or at any past time, elikated mushkies forsically? State date of all occurrences. If no occurrences, state the reason for transgrishal reduct as found."

Jackson read no farther. "What does it mean," he asked Erum, "to elikate mushkies forsically?"

"Mean?" Erum smiled uncertainly. "Why, it means exactly what it says. Or so I would imagine."

"I meant," Jackson said, "that I do not understand the words. Could you explain them to me?"

"Nothing simpler," Erum replied. "To elikate mushkies is almost the same as a bifur probishkai."

"I beg your pardon?" Jackson said.

"It means — well, to *elikate* is really rather simple, though perhaps not in the eyes of the law. Scorbadising is a form of elikation, and so is manruv garing. Some say that when we breathe drorsically in the evening subsis we are actually elikating. Personally, I consider that a bit fanciful."

"Let's try mushkies," Jackson suggested.

"By all means, let's!" Erum replied, with a coarse boom of laughter. "If only one could — eh?" He dug Jackson in the ribs with a sly elbow.

"Hm, yes," Jackson replied coldly. "Perhaps you could tell me what, exactly, a mushkie is?"

"Of course. As it happens, there is no such thing," Erum replied. "Not in the singular, at any rate. One mushkie would be a logical fallacy, don't you see?"

"I'll take your word for it. What *are mushkies*?"

"Well, primarily, they're the object of elikation. Secondarily, they are halfsize wooden sandals which are used to stimulate erotic fantasies among the Kutor religionists."

"Now we're getting someplace!" Jackson cried.

"Only if your tastes happen to

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run that way," Erum answered with discernable coldness.

"I meant in terms of understanding the question on the form —"

"Of course, excuse me," Erum said. "But you see, the question asks if you have ever elikated mushkies *forsically*. And that makes all the difference."

"Does it really?"

"Of course! The modification changes the entire meaning."

"I was afraid that it would," Jackson said. "I don't suppose you could explain what forsically means?"

"I certainly can!" Erum said. "Our conversation now could — with a slight assist from the deme imagination — be termed a *forsically designed talk*."

"Ah," said Jackson.

"Quite so," said Erum. "Forsically is a mode, a manner It means 'spiritually-forward-leading - by - way - of - fortuitous - frieindship.'"

"That's a little more like it," Jackson said. "In that case, when one elikates mushkies forsically —"

"I'm terribly afraid you're on the wrong track," Erum said. "The definition I gave you applies only to conversations. It is something rather different when one speaks of mushkies."

"What does it mean then?"

"Well, it means — or rather it *expresses* — an advanced and intensified case of mushkie elikidation, but with a definite nmogmetic bias. I consider it a rather unfortunate phraseology, personally."

"How would you put it?"

"I'd lay it on the line and to hell with the fancy talk," Erum said toughly. "I'd come right out and say: 'Have you now or at any other time dunfiglers voc in illegal, immoral, or insirtis circumstances, with or without the aid and/or consent of a brachniian? If so, state when and why. If not, state neugris kris and why not.'"

"That's how you'd put it, huh?" Jackson said.

"Sure I would," Erum said difiantly. "These forms are for adults, aren't they? So why not come right out and call a spigler a spigler a spey? Everybody dunfiglers voc some of the time, and so what? No one's feelings are ever hurt by it, for heaven's sake. I mean, after all, it simply involves oneself and a twisted old piece of wood, so why should anyone care?"

"Wood?" Jackson echoed.

"Yes, *wood*. A commonplace, dirty old piece of wood. Or at least that's all it would be if people didn't get their feelings so ridiculously involved."

"What do they do with the

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wood?" Jackson asked quickly.

"*Do* with it? Nothing much, when you come right down to it. But the religious aura is simply too much for our so-called intellectuals. They are unable, in my opinion, to isolate the simple primordial fact — *wood* — from the cultural volturneiss which surrounds it at festerhiss, and to some extent at Uuis, too."

"That's how intellectuals are," Jackson said. "But *you* can isolate it, and you find —"

"I find it's really nothing to get excited about. I really mean that. I mean to say that a cathedral, viewed correctly, is no more than a pile of rocks, and a forest is just an assembly of atoms. Why should we see this case differently? I mean, really, you could elikate mushkies forsically without even *using* wood! What do you think of that?"

"I'm impressed," Jackson said.

"Don't get me wrong! I'm not saying it would be *easy*, or natural, or even *right*. But still, you damned well could! Why, you could substitute cormed grayti and still come out all right!" Erum paused and chuckled. "You'd look foolish, but you'd still come out all right."

"Very interesting," Jackson said.

"I'm afraid I became a bit vehement," Erum said, wiping his forehead. "Was I talking very loudly? Do you think perhaps I was overheard?"

"Of course not. I found it all very interesting. I must leave just now, Mr. Erum, but I'll be back tomorrow to fill out that form and buy the property."

"I'll hold it for you," Erum said, rising and shaking Jackson's hand warmly. "And I want to thank you. It isn't often that I have the opportunity for this kind of frank, no-holds-barred conversation."

"I found it very instructive," Jackson said. He left Erum's office and walked slowly back to his ship. He was disturbed, upset and annoyed. Linguistic incomprehension irked him, no matter how comprehensible it might be. He *should* have been able to have figured out, somehow, how one went about elikating mushkies forsically.

Never mind, he told himself. You'll work it out tonight, Jackson baby, and then you'll go back in there and cannonball through them forms. So don't get het up over it, man.

He'd work it out. He damned well had to work it out, since he had to own a piece of property.

That was the second part of his job.

Earth had come a long way since the bad old days of naked, aggressive warfare. Ac-

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cording to the history books, a ruler back in those ancient times could simply send out his troops to seize whatever the ruler wanted. And if any of the folks at home had the temerity to ask why he wanted it, the ruler could have them beheaded, or locked up in a dungeon, or sewn up in a sack and thrown into the sea. And he wouldn't even feel guilty about doing any of those things because he invariably believed that he was right and they were wrong.

This policy, technically called the *droit de signeur,* was one of the most remarkable features of the *laissez faire capitalism* which the ancients knew.

But, down the slow passage of centuries, cultural processes were inexorably at work. A new ethic came into the world; and slowly but surely, a sense of fair play and justices was bred into the human race. Rulers came to be chosen by ballot, and were responsive to the desires of the electorate. Conceptions of Justices, Mercy and Pity came to the forefront of men's minds, ameliorating the old law of tooth and talon, and amending the savage bestiality of the ancient time of unreconstruction.

The old days were gone forever. Today, no ruler could simply *take;* the voters would never stand for it.

Nowadays one had to have an excuse for taking.

Like for example a Terran citizen who happened to own property all legal and aboveboard on an alien planet, and who urgently needed and requested Terran military assistance in order to protect himself, his home, his means of a legitimate livelihood . . .

But first he had to own that property. He had to *really* own it, to protect himself from the bleeding-hearts Congressmen and the soft-on-aliens newsmen who always started an investigation whenever Earth took charge of another planet.

To provide a legal basis for conquest — that was what the Contactors were for.

"Jackson," Jackson said to himself, "you gonna sit yourself that li'l ole bromicaine factory tomorrow and you gonna own it without let or hindrance. You heah me, boy? I mean it sincerely."

On the morrow, shortly before noon, Jackson was back in the city. Several hours of intensive study, and a long consultation with this tutor, had sufficed to show him where he had gone wrong.

It was simple enough. He had merely been a trifle hasty in assuming an extreme and invariant isolating technique in the

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Hon use of radicals. He had thought, on the basis of his early studies, that word-meaning and word-order were the only significant factors required for an understanding of the language. But that wasn't so. Upon further examination, Jackson found that the Hon language had some unexpected recourses; affixation, for example, and an elementary form of reduplication. Yesterday he hadn't even been prepared for any morphological inconsistencies; when they had occurred, he had found himself in semantic difficulties.

The new forms were easy enough to learn. The trouble was, they were thoroughly illogical and contrary to the entire spirit of Hon.

One word produced by one sound, and bearing one meaning — that was the rule he had previously deduced. But now he discovered 18 important exceptions — compounds produced by a variety of techniques, each of them with a list of modifying suffixes. For Jackson, this was as odd as stumbling across a grove of palm trees in Antarctica.

He learned the 18 exceptions, and thought about the article he would write when he finally got home.

And the next day, wiser and warier, Jackson strode meaningfully back to the city.

IV

In Erum's office, he filled out the government forms with ease. That first question — "Have you now or at any past time, elikated mushkies forsically?" — he could now answer with an honest no. The plural 'mushkies' in its primary meaning, represented in this context, the singular 'woman.' (The singular 'mushkie' used similarly, would denote an uncorporeal state of femininity.)

Elikation was, of course, the role of sexual termination, unless one employed the modifier 'forsically.' If one did, this quiet term took on a charged meaning in this particular context, tantamount to edematous polysexual advocation.

Thus, Jackson could honestly write that, since he was not a Naian, he had never had that particular urge.

It was as simple as that. Jackson was annoyed at himself for not having figured it out on his own.

He filled in the rest of the questions without difficulty, and handed the paper back to Erum.

"That's really quite skoe," Erum said. "Now, there are just a few more simple items for us to complete. The first we can do immediately. After that I will arrange a brief official ceremony

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for the Property Transferral Act, and that will be followed by several other small bits of business. All of it should take no more than a day or so, and then the property will be all yours."

"Sure, kid, that's great," Jackson said. He wasn't bothered by the delays. Quite the contrary, he had expected many more of them. On most other planets, the locals caught on quickly to what was happening. It took no great reasoning power to figure out that Earth wanted what she wanted, but wanted it in a legalistic manner.

As for why she wanted it that way — that wasn't too hard to fathom, either. A great majority of Terrans were idealist, and they believed fervently in concepts such as truth, justice, mercy and the like. And not only did they believe, they also let those noble concepts guide their actions — except when it would be inconvenient or unprofitable. When that happened, they acted expediently, but continued to talk moralistically. This meant that they were *hypocrites* — a term which every race has its counterpart of.

Terrans wanted what they wanted, but they also wanted that what they wanted should look nice. This was a lot to expect sometimes, especially when what they wanted was ownership of someone else's planet. But in one way or another, they usually got it.

Most alien races realized that overt resistance was impossible, and resorted to various stalling tactics.

Sometimes they refused to sell, or they required an infinite multiplicity of forms, or the approval of some local official who was always absent. But for each ploy the Contactor always had a suitable counter-ploy.

Did they refuse to sell property on racial grounds? The laws of Earth specifically forbade such practices, and the Declaration of Sentient Rights stated the freedom of all sentients to live and work wherever they pleased. This was a freedom that Terra would fight for, if anyone forced them to.

Were they stalling? The Terran Doctrine of Temporal Propriety would not allow it.

Was the necessary official absent? The Uniform Earth Code Against Implicit Sequestration in Acts of Omission expressly forbade such a practice . . . And so on and so on. It was a game of wits Earth invariably won, since the strongest is usually judged the cleverest.

But the Naians weren't even *trying* to fight back. Jackson considered that downright despicable.

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The exchange of Naian currency for Terran platinum was completed and Jackson was given his change in crisp 50-Vrso bills. Erum beamed with pleasure, and said, "Now, Mr. Jackson, we can complete today's business if you will kindly trombramcthulanchierir in the usual manner."

Jackson turned, his eyes narrowed and his mouth compressed into a bloodless downward-curving line.

"What did you say?"

"I merely asked you to —"

"I know what you asked! But what does it *mean*?"

"Well, it means — it means—" Erum laughed weakly. "— it means exactly what it says. That is to say — ethybolically speaking —"

Jackson said in a low, dangerous voice, "Give me a synonym."

"There is no synonym," Erum said.

"Baby, you better come up with one anyhow," Jackson said, his hand closing over Erum's throat.

"Stop! Wait! Ulp!" Erum cried. "Mr. Jackson, I beg of you! How can there be a synonym when there is one and only one term for the thing expressed — if I may so express it?"

"You're putting me on!" Jackson howled. "And you better quit it, on account of we got laws against willful obfuscation, inten-

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tional obstructionism, implicit superimposition and other stuff like you're doing. You hear me?"

"I hear you," Erum trembled.

"Then hear this: *stop agglutinating*, you devious dog! You've got a perfectly ordinary run-of-the-mill analytical-type language, distinguished only by its extreme isolating tendency. And when you got a language like that, man, then you simply don't agglutinate a lot of big messy compounds. Get me?"

"Yes, yes," Erum cried. "But believe me, I don't intend to numniscaterate in the slightest! Not noniskakkekaki, and you really must debruchili that!"

Jackson drew back his fist, but got himself under control in time. It was unwise to hit aliens if there was any possibility that they were telling the truth. Folks on Terra didn't like it. His pay could be docked; and if, by some unlucky chance, he killed Erum, he could be slapped with a six month jail sentence.

But still . . .

"I'll find out if you're lying or not!" Jackson screamed, and stormed out of the office.

He walked for nearly an hour, mingling with the crowds in the slum quarters of Grath-Eth, below the gray, evil-smelling Ungperdis. No one paid any attention to him. To all outward appearances, he could have been a Naian, just as any Naian could have been a Terran.

Jackson located a cheerful saloon on the corner of Niis and Da Streets, and went in.

It was quiet and masculine inside. Jackson ordered a local variety of beer. When it was served, he said to the bartender, "Funny thing happened to me the other day."

"Yeah?" said the bartender.

"Yeah, really," Jackson said. "I had this big business deal on, see, and then at the last minute they asked me to trombramcthulanchierir in the usual manner."

He watched the bartender's face carefully. A faint expression of puzzlement crossed the man's stolid features.

"So why didn't you?" the bartender asked.

"You mean *you* would have?"

"Sure I would have. Hell, it's the standard cathanpriptiaia, ain't it?"

"Course it is," one of the loungers at the bar said. "Unless, of course, you suspected they was trying to numniscaterate."

"No, I don't think they were trying anything like that," Jackson said in a flat low, lifeless voice. He paid for his drink and started to leave.

"Hey," the bartender called after him, "You sure they wasn't noniskakkekaki?"

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"You never know," Jackson said, walking slump-shouldered into the street.

Jackson trusted his instincts, both with languages and with people. His instincts told him now that the Naians were straight, and were not practicing an elaborate deception on him. Erum had not been inventing new words for the sake of willful confusion. He had been really speaking the Hon language as he knew it.

But if that were true, then Na was a very strange language. In fact, it was down-right eccentric. And its implications were not merely curious.

They were disastrous.

V

That evening Jackson went back to work. He discovered a further class of exceptions which he had not known or even suspected. That was a group of 29 multi-valued potentiators. These words, meaningless in themselves, acted to elicit a complicated and discordant series of shadings from other words. Their particular type of potentiation varied according to their position in the sentence.

Thus, when Erum had asked him "to trombramcthulanchierir in the usual manner," he had merely wanted Jackson to make an obligatory ritual obeisance. This consisted of clasping his hands behind his neck and rocking back on his heels. He was required to perform this action with an expression of definite yet modest pleasure, in accordance with the totality of the situation, and also in accord with the state of his stomach and nerves and with his religion and ethical code, and bearing in mind minor temperamental differences due to fluctuations in heat and humidity, and not forgetting the virtues of patience, similitude and forgiveness.

It was all quite understandable. And all completely contradictory to everything Jackson had previously learned about Hon.

It was more than contradictory; it was unthinkable, impossible, and entirely out of order. It was as if, having discovered palm trees in frigid Antarctica, he had further found that the fruit of these trees was, not coconuts, but muscatel grapes.

It couldn't be—but it was.

Jackson did what was required of him. When he had finished trombramcthulanchierering in the usual manner, he had only to get through the official ceremony and the several small requirements after it.

Erum assured him that it was all quite simple, but Jackson suspected that he might somehow have difficulties.

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So, in preparation, he put in three days of hard work acquiring a real mastery of the 29 exceptional potentiators, together with their most common positions, and their potentiating effect in each of these positions. He finished, bone-weary and with his irritability index risen to 97.3620 on the Grafheimer scale. An impartial observer might have noticed an ominous gleam in his china-blue eyes.

Jackson had had it. He was sick of the Hon language and of all things Naian. He had the vertiginous feeling that the more he learned, the less he knew. It was downright perverse.

"Hokay," Jackson said, to himself and to the universe at large. "I have learned the Naian langauge, and I have learned a set of completely inexplicable exceptions, *and* I have *also* learned a further and even more contradictory set of exceptions to the exceptions."

Jackson paused, and in a very low voice said: "I have learned an *exceptional* number of exceptions. Indeed, an impartial observer might think that this language is composed of nothing *but* exceptions.

"But *that*," he continued, "is damned well impossible, unthinkable and unacceptable. A language is by God and by definition *systematic*, which means it's gotta follow some kind of *rules*. Otherwise nobody can't understand *nobody*. That's the way it works and that's the way it's gotta be. And if anyone thinks they can horse around linguisticwise with Fred C. Jackson—"

Here Jackson paused and drew the blaster from his holster. He checked the charge, snapped off the safety and replaced the weapon.

"Just better no one give old Jackson no more doubletalking," old Jackson muttered. "Because the next alien who tries it is going to get a three-inch circle drilled through his lousy cheating guts."

So saying, Jackson marched back to the city. He was feeling decidedly light-headed, but absolutely determined. His job was to steal this planet out from under its inhabitants in a legal manner, and in order to do that he had to make sense out of their language. Therefore, in one way or another, he was going to *make* sense. Either that, or he was going to make some corpses.

At this point, he didn't much care which.

Erum was in his office, waiting for him. With him were the mayor, the President of the City Council, the Borough President, two aldermen and the Director of the Board of Estimates.

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All of them were smiling—affably, albeit nervously. Strong spirits were present on a sideboard, and there was a subdued air of fellowship in the room.

All in all, it looked as if Jackson were being welcomed as a new and highly respected property owner, an adornment to Fakka. Aliens took it that way sometimes: made the best of a bad bargain by trying to ingratiate themselves with the Inevitable Earthman.

"Mun," said Erum, shaking his hand enthusiastically.

"Same to you, kid," Jackson said. He had no idea what the word meant. Nor did he care. He had plenty of other Naian words to choose among, and he had the determination to force matters to a conclusion.

"Mun!" said the mayor.

"Thanks, pop," said Jackson.

"Mun!" declared the other officials.

"Glad you boys feel that way," said Jackson. He turned to Erum. "Well, let's get it over with, okay?"

"Mun-mun-mun," Erum replied. "Mun, mun-mun."

Jackson stared at him for several seconds. Then he said, in a low, controlled voice, "Erum, baby, just exactly *what* are you trying to say to me?"

"Mun, mun, mun," Erum stated firmly. "Mun, mun mun mun. Mun mun." He paused, and in a somewhat nervous voice asked the mayor: "Mun, mun?"

"Mun . . . mun mun," the mayor replied firmly, and the other officials nodded. They all turned to Jackson.

"Mun, *mun*-mun?" Erum asked him, tremulously, but with dignity.

Jackson was numbed speechless. His face turned a choleric red and a large blue vein started to pulse in his neck. But he managed to speak slowly, calmly and with infinite menace.

"Just *what*," he said, "do you lousy third-rate yokels think you're pulling?"

"Mun-mun?" the mayor asked Erum.

"Mun-mun, mun-mun-mun," Erum replied quickly, making a gesture of incomprehension.

"You better talk sense," Jackson said. His voice was still low, but the vein in his neck writhed like a firehose under pressure.

"Mun!" one of the aldermen said quickly to the Borough President.

"Mun mun-mun mun?" the Borough President answered piteously, his voice breaking on the last word.

"So you won't talk sense, huh?"

"*Mun*! Mun-mun!" the mayor cried his face gone ashen with fright.

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The others looked, and saw Jackson's right hand clearing the blaster and taking aim at Erum's chest.

"Quit horsing around!" Jackson commanded. The vein in his neck pulsed like a python in travail.

"Mun - mun - mun!" Erum pleaded, dropping to his knees.

"Mun-mun-mun!" the mayor shrieked, rolling his eyes and fainting.

"You get it now," Jackson said to Erum. His finger whitened on the trigger.

Erum, his teeth chattering, managed to gasp out a strangled "Mun-mun, mun?" But then his nerves gave way and he waited for death with jaw agape and eyes unfocused.

Jackson took up the last fraction of slack in the trigger. Then, abruptly, he let up and shoved the blaster back in its holster.

"Mun, mun!" Erum managed to say.

"Shaddap," Jackson said. He stepped back and glared at the cringing Naian officials.

He would have dearly loved to blast them all. But he couldn't do it. Jackson had to come to a belated acknowledgement of an unacceptable reality.

His impeccable linguist's ear had heard, and his polyglot brain had analyzed. Dismayingly he had realized that the Naians were not trying to put anything over on him. They were speaking, not nonsense, but a true language.

This language was made up at present of the single sound 'mun.' This sound could carry an extensive repertoire of meanings through variations in pitch and pattern, changes in stress and quantity, alteration of rhythm and repetition, and through accompanying gestures and facial expressions.

A language consisting of infinite variations on a single word! Jackson didn't want to believe it, but he was too good a linguist to doubt the evidence of his own trained senses.

He could learn this language, of course.

But by the time he had learned it, what would it have changed into?

Jackson sighed and rubbed his face wearily. In a sense it was inevitable. All languages change. But on Earth and the few dozen worlds she had contacted, the languages changed with relative slowness.

On Na, the rate of change was faster. Quite a bit faster.

The Na language changed like fashions change on Earth, only faster. It changed like prices change or like the weather changes. It changed endlessly and incessantly, in accordance with un-

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known rules and invisible principles. It changed its form like an avalanche changes its shape. Compared with it, English was like a glacier.

The Na language was, truly and monstrously, a simulacrum of Heraclitus's river.

You cannot step into the same river twice, said Heraclitus; for other waters are forever flowing on.

Concerning the language of Na, this was simply and literally true.

That made it bad enough. But even worse was the fact that an observer like Jackson could never hope to fix or isolate even one term out of the dynamic shifting network of terms that composed the Na language. For the observer's action would be gross enough by itself to disrupt and alter the system, causing it to change unpredictably. And so, if the term were isolated, its relationship to the other terms in the system would necessarily be destroyed, and the term itself, by definition, would be false.

By the fact of its change, the language was rendered impervious to codification and control. Through indeterminacy, the Na tongue resisted all attempts to conquer it. And Jackson had gone from Heraclitus to Heisenberg without touching second base. He was dazed and dazzled, and he looked upon the officials with something approaching awe.

"You've done it, boys," he told them. "You've beaten the system. Old Earth could swallow you and never notice the difference; you couldn't do a damned thing about it. But the folks back home like their legalism, and our law says that we must be in a state of communication as a prior condition to any transaction."

"Mun?" Erum asked politely.

"So I guess that means I leave you folks alone," Jackson said. "At least, I do as long as they keep that law on the books. But what the hell, a reprieve is the best anyone can ask for. Eh?"

"Mun mun," the mayor said hesitantly.

"I'll be getting along now," Jackson said. "Fair's fair . . . But if I ever find out that you Naians were putting one over on me—"

He left the sentence unfinished. Without another word, Jackson turned and went back to his ship.

In half an hour he was spaceworthy, and fifteen minutes after that he was underway.

VI

In Erum's office, the officials watched while Jackson's spaceship glowed like a comet in the dark afternoon sky. It dwindled to a brilliant needle-point,

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and then vanished into the vastness of space.

The officials were silent for a moment; then they turned and looked at each other. Suddenly, spontaneously, they burst into laughter. Harder and harder they laughed, clutching their sides while tears rolled down their cheeks.

The mayor was the first to check the hysteria. Getting a grip on himself he said, "Mun, mun, mun-mun."

This thought instantly sobered the others. Their mirth died away. Uneasily they contemplated the distant unfriendly sky, and they thought back over their recent adventures.

At last young Erum asked, "Mun-mun? Mun-mun?"

Several of the officials smiled at the naivete of the question. And yet, none could answer that simple yet crucial demand. Why indeed? Did anyone dare hazard even a guess?

It was a perplexity leaving in doubt not only the future but the past as well. And, if a real answer were unthinkable, then no answer at all was surely insupportable.

The silence grew, and Erum's young mouth twisted downward in premature cynicism. He said quite harshly, "Mun! Mun-mun! Mun?"

His shocking words were no more than the hasty cruelty of the young; but such a statement could not go unchallenged. And the venerable first alderman stepped forward to essay a reply.

"Mun mun, mun-mun," the old man said, with disarming simplicity. "Mun mun mun-mun? Mun mun-mun-mun. Mun mun mun; mun mun mun; mun mun. Mun, mun mun mun—mun mun mun. Mun-mun? Mun mun mun mun!"

This straightforward declaration of faith pierced Erum to the core of his being. Tears sprang unanticipated to his eyes. All postures forgotten, he turned to the sky, clenched his fist and shouted, "Mun! Mun! Mun-mun!"

Smiling serenely, the old alderman murmured, "Mun-mun-mun; mun, mun-mun."

This was, ironically enough, the marvellous and frightening truth of the situation. Perhaps it was just as well that the others did not hear.

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

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